Shock Antistatico

Early Bolognese Punk (1977-1980) and the Long Seventies

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Abstract

This study reconstructs and analyses the early punk scene in Bologna between 1977-1980 in the context of the socio-political climate of late-seventies Italy. The Italian Long Seventies – an historical period ranging from the end of the 1960s to the first half of the 1980s - have been characterised by violent ideological conflicts accompanied by frequent terrorist attacks, mass-scale demonstrations, street riots, and a general climate of social instability. In Bologna, a city which had been administered by the Communist Party since the foundation of the Italian Republic, punk found itself in the middle of a lacerating conflict within the leftist front.

These peculiar circumstances produced a vital music scene which gave birth to some of the most notable examples of early Italian punk-inspired bands, labels, fanzines, festivals and live concert venues.

Using the Bolognese punk scene as a case study, the main aim of this thesis is to provide a fuller understanding of the relationship between politics and popular culture in late-seventies Italy.

A secondary aim is to determine the extent to which approval from the Marxist political sphere was functional to the acceptance – or the rejection – of rock-related popular music trends and subcultural styles in this phase of Italy's contemporary history, especially in politically leading urban centres such as Bologna, Rome and Milan.

The methods used are a combination of archival research drawing on primary sources and the collection of oral histories by original scene members and witnesses. As my comparative accounts of the Roman and Milanese scenes show, Bolognese punk managed to thrive by virtue of its alliances with the local radical Left-wing movement and, albeit incidentally, with the contribution of institutional politics. This demonstrates how during the Italian Long Seventies - in local contexts dominated by leftist politics and characterised by intense radical activism – rock-related youth cultures could take root only when they found substantial support from the ranks of the Marxist Left.

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All translations in the present work are by the author, unless stated otherwise.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This PhD focuses on the early appropriation of punk rock in the city of Bologna between the years 1977 and 1980. I will examine the Bolognese punk scene in the context of the local and national socio-political situation in the second half of the 1970s. In Italy, information about punk started circulating while the country was still caught in a long cycle of intense social and political contention which had originated with the student and worker protests of 1968. This period of Italian contemporary history, ranging from 1968/1969 until the early 1980s, has been described by historians as the Italian Long Seventies or – at journalistic level – *'Anni di Piombo'* (Years of Lead): these years were characterised by profound social divisions, mass-scale political engagement, continued terrorist attacks and everyday episodes of political violence. The public debate was heavily polarised and driven by ideological arguments. As it will be argued throughout the present work, Italy's climate of radical polarisation extended to the field of popular culture, clothing and music, thus decisively affecting the everyday life and tastes of many young Italians. In the Bolognese setting, conflicts were taking place mostly within the local Marxist left. The main conflict was between the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano* and/or PCI in the present text), which had been guiding the local and regional government since the second post war period, and the *Movimento del 1977*, a nation-wide wave of protest which saw Bologna as one of its epicentres. Moreover, between 1977 and 1980 the city was hit by a series of terrorist attacks and politically motivated incidents: these tragic events further exacerbated an already tense climate.

Under these difficult circumstances, Bolognese punk was able to thrive in ways that were undetected in other Italian political active urban centres. My work investigates the political, cultural, and social reasons which helped the local scene develop, despite a national context which was for the most past uninterested – if not openly hostile – to early punk. To do so, I will frame Bologna within the socio-political setting of late-seventies Italy. I will also use other urban punk scenes - such as the ones in Milan and the Rome - to draw terms of comparison for my case study. My aim is contributing to the tradition of Popular Music Studies on the peripheral appropriation of the punk subculture. Moreover, as I will argue throughout the present text, I believe that my work can bring a different perspective to the ongoing political and academic debate about this complex period of Italian contemporary history.

The motivation which has led me towards undertaking research on this subject comes from my academic interests as well as from my life experience. I have been an active member of the local independent music scene for more than 30 years. I have been working as a musician, manager for live venues and record labels, concert promoter, radio and club night DJ, record producer and music journalist/fanzine writer. Throughout the years, I had the opportunity to listen to several voices and different points of view about the reception of the first wave of punk in Italy. Even before the beginning of my personal involvement with the local alternative rock community, I had been regularly encountering tales about the early days of Italian and Bolognese punk. Often verbally transmitted by older scene members or reported in interviews, memories and band/artist biographies, these accounts invariably told the story of a contradictory, problematic and sometimes violent relationship between the first Italian punks and the radical protest movement of the late 1970s.

Nevertheless, despite this vast anecdotical collective memoir and its potential for fecund research work, I had noticed a substantial lack of comprehensive academic literature about the early steps of punk in Italy. Secondary literature of journalistic nature about early Italian punk was scarcely available as well. With a few exceptions, the only secondary sources about the first steps of Italian punk are scattered over a vast array of different formats: fanzines, audio blogs, radio broadcasts, personal memoirs and biographies. In recent years though, the works of journalists like Federico Guglielmi (2007), Stefano Gilardino (2017), Claudio Pescetelli (2013), Alessia Masini (2019) and Luca Frazzi (2003) have provided extensive written or audio/video reconstructions of the first Italian punk scene: these efforts have at least contributed to locating and mapping scenes, bands and punk- inspired activities in Italy between the late seventies and the early eighties. I will analyse these sources in the literature review chapter as they will constitute the bulk of my secondary literature material with regard to my subject.

However, a scarcity of academic research about the early perception and appropriation of punk in Italy can still be detected. It is rather striking, in my view, that the collision of a spectacularly provocative and apparently nihilistic subculture such as early punk with the violently ideological context of late-seventies Italy had so rarely aroused the curiosity of academics. As the research outcomes of annual conferences such as *Keep It Simple, Make*

It Fast[1] have demonstrated, the interest of academics for the peripheral appropriations of punk has indeed increased recently: however, the early steps of Italian punk are still largely ignored by the scientific community.[2] This is even more surprising in the light of the abundance of historical, socio-political and cultural text work which has been dedicated to the Italian Long Seventies. It must be noted how some of these publications do touch on the subject of punk by listing it among the emerging popular culture trends of the period: nevertheless, research work which is specifically focusing on the first articulations of this subcultural style in Italy is still largely lacking.

Early Punk and Hardcore

In contrast with the above-mentioned lack of academic sources about late-seventies Italian punk, there are indeed some examples of research about the Italian Anarcho-punk and hardcore scenes of the early 1980s.[3] This tendency mirrors the different judgement that the music press and several music enthusiasts have expressed for early punk and the scenes and genres which have taken initial inspiration from it. Indeed, even though both Anarcho-punk and hardcore did share common roots with early punk, these subsequent scenes have been perceived – by music fans and journalists – as more consistent and deserving of attention. This widespread preference for the Italian Anarcho-punk and hardcore scenes can be attributed to a richer recorded output, the deeper cultural impact of these genres on Italian independent rock/pop music and, particularly, to a more consistent political stance as opposed to the nihilistic and apparently superficial nature of early punk. This confirms a widespread tendency, shared by the Italian academic world, which sees this subculture as worthy of attention only when it explicitly presents itself as politically conscious. Furthermore the 'third person authentication' (Moore, 2002) that international gatekeepers such as north American fanzine *Maximum Rock and Roll* and scene leaders of

[1] Keep It Simple Make It Fast (KISMIF) is an annual international academic conference held in Porto since 2014. The conference focuses on the developments of academic research on underground music and Do It Yourself practices. For reference please chech the KISMIF website: http://www.kismifconference.com

[2] A welcome addition to research on early Italian punk has been recently produced by scholar Alessia Masini. In her book, *Siamo Nati Soli: Punk, Rock e Politica in Italia e in Gran Bretagna (1977-1984)* (Masini, 2019), she engages in a comparative analysis of the relationship between punk and politics in Italy and in the UK over the arc of 7 years. Masini's study will be reviewed in the literature review chapter of the present work.

[3] As examples see Bottà (2014) and De Sario (2008).

boundless 'subcultural capital' (Thornton, 1995) like Dead Kennedy's front man Jello Biafra - have publicly granted to Italian Anarcho-punk and hardcore has certainly helped cementing the status of this genres in the eyes of the Italian music *aficionados*. However, I am convinced that this widespread imbalance in perception between early Italian punk and its later developments is particularly revelatory of the Italian approach to popular culture during the Long Seventies. As it will be argued throughout this dissertation, while Anarcho-punk and hardcore managed to re-establish a connection with the Italian tradition of radical politics throughout the eighties, the nihilism of late-seventies punk represented an 'alien' element in which ideology was projected on a plane that was unusual and, in most cases, uneasy for the Italian political categories of that time. My claim is that, for a better understanding of the cultural politics of late seventies Italy, the problematic relationship between Italy and first-wave punk rock is just as interesting as the relative success of other musical genres because, on a wider scale, it exposes a national peculiarity in perceiving, absorbing and reworking international trends in popular culture. Furthermore, the arc of early Italian punk also shows how the permeation between music and politics in Italy had become inescapable in that historical period: the judgement and assessment of music genres and subcultural styles by cultural critics, opinion makers and even a large share of the public was heavily influenced by ideological categories.

The first wave of Bolognese punk did represent an attempt at breaking this direct correlation between popular culture – rock/pop music in particular - and politics which had characterised the cultural habitat of the radicalised, post-1968, Italian youth. It is my argument that this traumatic impact is one of the main reasons for Italian punk's problematic relationship with the socio-political context in which it initially appeared. However, as it will argued in the seventh chapter of the present work, Bologna was also at the centre of the progress of reconciliation between punk and the radical political sphere: the city's pioneering Anarcho-punk scene will play a fundamental role in establishing the musical and political network of Italian punk. Analysing the Bolognese scene thus becomes essential for understanding the development of the Italian appropriation of punk also beyond the three-year time frame of this research.

My underlying claim is that the inherent political meaning of early, nihilistic punk has been overlooked and misunderstood in Italy, both in the common perception and in the academic world: ideological values have prevailed over subcultural analysis in the 'traditional' assessment of Italian punk. I consider this approach as a cultural heritage of the Long Seventies: it originates in the early assessment of punk by the musical and political press of the time.

Italy's first wave punks refused to explicitly declare their political affiliation in an ideologically charged context. Moreover, they were making spectacular and satirical use of radical political iconography in a moment in which ideological belonging was, quite literally, a matter of life and death in Italy. This created a *semantic disorder* (Hedbige, 1979, P. 90) with the 1977 Movement which caused a negative reaction and a substantial rejection of early punk at national level. This fracture was only recomposed when punk openly embraced political activism, in the early eighties. However, the specific nature of the radical community in Bologna allowed the development of an active early punk scene since late 1977. In Bologna, this 'semantic disorder' was still perceived by many activists, but the reaction to it was not as aggressive in other Italian cities. Therefore, studying Bolognese punk will not only provide insight on the relationships between this subculture and radical Marxist activism: it will also be a unique chance to finally carry out research on early Italian punk as a subculture in its own right. I will do so by relying on key academic concepts which will be analysed in this literature review. This research also aims at subverting the predominant Italian point of view on punk, which has always looked at subcultures through the eyes of ideology. In this case, I would like to apply the opposite perspective: I would like to look at the ideologically charged Italian 'Long Seventies' through the eyes of a youth subculture.

'The Years of Lead' and 'The Long Seventies'

By analysing the Italian and, specifically, the Bolognese response to punk my research might also contribute to the ongoing scientific debate about the so-called Italian *Anni di Piombo* - or 'The Long Seventies'. The journalistic expression 'Years of Lead', borrowed from a 1981

film by German director Margarethe Von Trotta,[4] was adopted in the Italian public debate to describe the gloom-ridden and violent atmosphere of this period of Italian history which is commonly associated with terrorism, ideological division and political violence. Recently, historians have introduced the expression Long Seventies to encapsulate this extended phase of socio-political contention.[5] Furthermore, scientific studies have put into question the conventionally accepted narrative about this historical period. In particular, the traditional periodisation which saw the years between 1977 and 1980 – the time frame of this research – as the core of a long season of setback and retreat for the Italian radical Marxists commonly called *Il Riflusso* (The Setback) has been recently problematised by numerous historians. Among these new studies, Maud Bracke's *Women and the Reinvention of the Political. Feminism in Italy, 1968-1983* (2014) must certainly be mentioned, as it highlights the concurrence and the correlation of some important late-seventies/early eighties achievements of the Italian Feminist movement with the final stages of Italy's long phase of social contention. More recently, an essay by Alessia Masini in the scientific journal *Meridiana* (Masini, 2018) established a connection between feminism, punk and the historical context of the time, thus providing a framework in which the Italian enactment of this subculture can be read as one of the expressions of a growing desire to overcome the political stasis and the ideological rigidity which was affecting the Italian radical front by the end of the 1970s. However, Masini's essay focuses mainly on the Anarcho-punk underground of the early 1980s which, in my perspective, can be interpreted as an adaptation of the iconoclast articulations of early punk to the dynamics of Italy's radical politics.

Another View

These recent publications have demonstrated how the official narrative on this period of transformation of Italian society has been traditionally dominated by a male-centered, heteronormative point of view: indeed, most accounts tend to identify the crisis of the Italian Marxist left with a setback for the entire progressive front, thus neglecting or overlooking movements which have expanded and intensified their political action during

[4] Die Bleierne Zeit, (1981), Video, Ger: Margarethe Von Trotta

[5] See: Baldissara, L. *Le Radici Della Crisi: L'Italia tra Gli Anni Sessanta e Settanta* (Rome: Carocci, 2001)

the late stages of the Long-Seventies, in particular Italian feminism. Scientific investigation on Italian punk can only benefit from more inclusive approaches to historical analysis: as it will be demonstrated throughout the present work, for some individualities the punk subculture was a vehicle to express identities which had been neglected by traditional Italian society as well as by the progressive radical movement. For instance, women played a pivotal role in the early punk scene. Both in the Bolognese and in the wider national early punk scene, women participated actively as musicians, concert promoters, DJs, reporters, label managers, graphic designers, stylists and fanzine writers. This was an unprecedented phenomenon for a rock related subculture, especially in Italy. Nevertheless, the relationship between female punks and the Italian Feminist movement was sometimes problematic, as it has been often reported in memoirs, interviews and various contributions by members of the early punk scene. This is another reason why it is my deep conviction that analysing this phase of Italian history by following the punk *fil rouge* might contribute to a partial rethinking of some of the most conventional notions about the Italian seventies: this will lead to a more fluid, balanced and diversified account of a controversial historical period. The history of the Long Seventies has been narrated from different points of view, but not all voices have had equal chances to be heard: the 'punk perspective' can enrich the narrative on an historical phase which – to this day - is still at the centre of the Italian public debate.

Bologna, Rome and Milan

This thesis argues that the history of early Italian punk is for the most part a tale of hostility, misunderstanding and, in most cases, cultural marginalisation: the main reasons for this unhappy relationship are rooted in the country's socio-political context. From this perspective, focusing on the Bolognese scene might seem a contradictory, or even paradoxical choice: indeed, Bologna expressed some of the most important Italian punk bands, the first punk rock venue in the country and the earliest examples of punk-inspired independent record labels. However, the Bolognese case only confirms one of the underlying hypotheses of this research: in late- seventies Italy the support and acceptance from the political sphere was essential to the fortune of any rock related pop subculture. This argument does not exclude the possibility of other significant Italian first-wave punk scenes: however, in a socio-cultural climate which was dominated by ideology and in which

the musical and political spheres were closely intertwined, punk managed to develop and grow only when it was not met with structural opposition within the radical movement. Moreover, in politically active urban centres early punk could only take root if it found strategic allies within the cultural agencies of the radical movement: in chapters 6,7 and 8 of the present work we will see how this dynamic applies to the cases of Bologna and Milan.

This is also confirmed by other local scenes in social context which were less influenced by political activism. For example, small local punk scenes coagulated in northern provincial realities such as the cities of Verona and of Pordenone. In these medium-sized and heavily industrialised northern towns, mass-scale radical activism was not as common as in other areas of the country. Moreover, despite the presence of right-wing and left-wing terrorism, in both regions ideological confrontations were experienced mostly through the media. The high rate of employment – and consequent economic independence - of the local youth gave some local teenagers the chance to expand and diversify their popular culture consumption habits, thus encountering different international music genres such as punk and heavy metal. Some travelled to the UK and, according to the memoirs of some local scene members, had the chance to attend early punk shows**.** Acting as catalysts for their peer group, these individuals were able to gather small groups of peers around their passion for this new musical style (Mazzocut, 2005).

Nevertheless, a rich social background combined with a lack of widespread political activism was not and exclusive condition for the development of local punk scenes in late seventies Italy. As will be detailed in chapter eight of this thesis, groups of punk fans also gathered in specific suburban settings, such as the *Borgate Romane*.
Le Borgate were several peripheral quarters of Rome's metropolitan area which were much more financially disadvantaged than the North-Eastern reality of Pordenone. These metropolitan quarters were mostly inhabited by members of the proletarian or sub proletarian classes, who were stricken by unemployment. During the Fascist regime and in the aftermath of the second World War, the rapid and largely unplanned growth of these areas led to the formation of entire quarters of slums which often took the characteristics of severely impoverished townships. Often lacking basic public services, the *Borgate* were also isolated from the Capital's city centre and other urban areas due to scarce public

transport services and a still underdeveloped road system. The citizens of these areas were cut-off from the working, financial and cultural life of their peers living in other parts of Rome. The *Borgate* were often depicted by Italian media as extremely problematic areas, affected by poverty, alienation and moral degradation. As a result, for an individual or a group, coming from the *Borgate* carried a stigma which was particularly discrediting in Italian and Roman society. Nevertheless, *Borgate* neighborhoods like Centocelle produced self-styled appropriations of the punk trend which were enacted directly by local teenagers with very scarce external input. My argument is that the development of a local punk-inspired scene was directly connected with the nature of leftist activism. Despite the active presence of political collectives, in the *Borgate* the perception of popular culture was not entirely saturated with the hegemonic influence of the Marxist extra-parliamentary Left: in the context of these disadvantaged suburban areas, activists were more preoccupied with basic needs of the population such as housing and job problems. This allowed the local youth to congregate around popular culture trends which were not necessarily approved by the Left. This characteristic sets the Roman suburban punk scene apart from other Italian cities such as Bologna and Milan. Moreover, it shows how the development of the scene - in some cases - coincided with a comparatively looser control by the Left in the field of popular culture.

In the case of Rome though, the penetration of the punk subculture in the urban reality was limited and for the most part circumscribed to the local independent music scene and to teenage social groups. On the other hand, early punk did leave a tangible mark only in those urban contexts in which the crosspollination between the cultural and political sphere was extremely advanced and in which the orthodox practices and cultural habits of the radical protest front had been challenged and put into question from within the political movement itself. Due to the above-mentioned symbiosis of ideology and cultural production, with politics firmly in a dominating position over the assessment of cultural items, occasional synergies between the punks and the radicals made it possible to partially overcome the suspicion and the hostility with which punk was normally greeted in the radical Marxist social sphere.

These specific conditions could be found in Milan and, in a more advanced form, in Bologna. As it will be argued in chapters 6,7 and 8, Bologna and Milan were the cities in which punk was able to find strategic alliances within the ranks of the radical-left movements and thus managed to survive and take root, albeit with different fortunes. In Milan, punk had several 'access points' through which it managed to infiltrate the life of the local youth: the city was the home of several established Italian record companies (Dischi Ricordi, CGD, Durium) as well as international record Polydor, EMI and Warner Music. Moreover, new labels such as Divergo, Ultima Spiaggia and Cramps were championing younger Italian artists some of which had their roots in the *Movimento*. As a result, some of the earliest Italian punk records were released by Milan based acts. The students of the many design and visual arts schools based in the Capital of Lombardy were always scrutinizing new popular culture trends for ideas: punk did not go unnoticed in this milieu which produced notable punk-inspired artifacts (fanzines, poster art, photographic reports, logos). The Milanese fashion industry did respond to punk as well: in particular, the Fiorucci brand started its own punk-inspired line. Despite several episodes of intolerance as well as organised boycotts towards early punk by Left Wing activists, in Milan the new subculture managed to find some supporters within the Movement. This resulted in bands forming within Movimento-managed culture centres and even in a punk festival organised by one of Radio Popolare Milano's most prominent DJs.[6]

However, even if Milan did produce a multi-faceted and vital scene, it was only in Bologna that early punk managed to influence the dynamics of the local cultural and radical community, thus leaving a mark which is still recognisable today. This is ascribable a number of reasons: the small size of the city, its tradition for participative public life, the presence of a lively student community, the essentially non-violent and unorthodox nature of the local extra-parliamentary Marxist movement, the fundamental absence of neo-Fascist opposition – and of Fascist youth organisations – and the tendency by the local administration to actively influence and orientate the cultural life of the city in order to pursue its political goals. In a society in which politics and culture were almost inextricably intertwined, the causes for punk's cultural marginalisation were mainly ideological. For the

[6] Still active today, Radio Popolare Milano is the most important radical left-wing radio station in Milan.

same reason, it was only where punk was adopted by the larger political sphere that this subculture was able to penetrate in the fabric of Italian public life, at least at local level: this is the specific case of the city of Bologna and its early local scene. A case which, it is my argument, confirms the decisive role played by ideology in the assessment of popular culture trends in late seventies Italy. Moreover, when analysed in comparison with other punk scenes, the Bolognese scene remarks the crucial differences – if not inequalities – in geo-political, cultural, social and financial conditions which characterise the Italian territory to this day. I have opted for Milan and Rome as terms of comparisons for Bologna because these three cities, albeit presenting radically different socio-economic conditions, all shared two common traits: a guiding role in the protest movement of the Long Seventies and an active local punk scene.

Red Bologna

In the present work, the term *Movimento* (or '*i Movimenti*': The Movements) will be used with different meanings: in the parts referring to the general situation of the country, the term must be intended as that vast front of – mainly extra parliamentary - political engagement which was active to the Left of the *PCI* during the entire arc of the Long Seventies. In those parts which are dealing with the Bolognese context between the years 1976/77 and 1980, the term *Movimento* (often further denoted as *Movimento del 1977*) must instead be understood as a specific phase of contention within the wider scope of the Long Seventies. Indeed, in the second half of the 1970s, Bologna found itself among the leading cities of a new season of left-wing political protest and social mobilisation known as *Movimento del 1977* (the 1977 Movement).

The Bolognese branch of the Movement was experimenting with a peculiar take on the protest which considered art, free expression, sarcasm and creativity as fundamental weapons in the struggle against capitalism and traditional Italian society: this branch of the Movement was called the *Ala Creativa* (Creative Wing). Bologna – and its surrounding region Emilia-Romagna – had been ruled by the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI) since the second post world war period: Bologna was widely perceived by the Italian public opinion as the left-wing capital of the country. However, the Bolognese political experiment became a catalyst for the hopes of the Left also beyond Italy's borders: in 1977 a group of Swiss and German journalists, historians and political scientists published a collection of

essays about the city's ideological identity and administrative organisation titled Red Bologna (Jaggi et al., 1977).[7] The book described Bologna as an outpost of socialism in the Western world, a city where the rights of the individual went hand in hand with social justice and the progress of the community. The book examined every aspect of the city's life and organization, from transport to education, from work to town planning. Even if some criticism of the local model can be detected, for the most part in interviews with Bolognese citizens, and a few problems are acknowledged, in the pages of Red Bologna the town is presented as a blueprint and a beacon of hope for the new perspectives and possibilities of the Marxist Left in a Western European context.

In the post-war Italian political imagery Bologna played a powerful symbolic role: it was the prime example of the ruling capabilities of the Italian Communist Party. Since the institution of the Italian Republic, the *PCI* had always been relegated to the opposition in the formation of national government coalitions. Through Bologna and the Emilia-Romagna region, the Party demonstrated that it could successfully rule and administer a rich and wealthy part of the country: in the eyes of a large share of the country's public opinion, Bologna and its region represented a positive, stable and reassuring model for a possible future Communist Party-led national government. The local extra-parliamentary protest though determined a powerful dissonance in this political narrative. In that context, the Bolognese *Movimento del 1977* did not only stand in opposition to the national settlement of the country, but also to the local PCI led administration, thus signaling a fracture within the local as well as national leftist front. As Giorgio Lavagna, one of the members of the punk rock band Gaznevada, has declared: *'In Bologna […] being against the power automatically meant being against the party [PCI]'* (V. A., 2017, p. 92*).*

These divisions were inflamed by the incidents of March 1977, when Marxist university student Francesco Lorusso was shot and killed by a riot squad of the *Carabinieri.*[8] The

[7] The city of Bologna is commonly referred to as *La Rossa* (the Red One) because of the traditional red colour of its houses. Due to the city's leftist history, the definition also took on a political *double entendre* in Italian public consciousness: the book's title seems is hinting at this double meaning.

[8] *Carabinieri* are a branch of the Italian army which carries out police duties as well as traditionally military ones.

student and radical community reacted with a three-day long revolt which was only sedated by the intervention of the Italian army. The military intervention, which had been authorised by the city's Mayor and *PCI* party member Renato Zangheri, was proposed by the minister of internal affairs Francesco Cossiga, a fervent anti-Communist and one of the sworn enemies of the Italian extra-parliamentary front. For the first time since the end of the Second World War the centre of the city was occupied by armed forces. These events radicalised the confrontation between the local radicals and the largest Communist party on the Western, American influenced front of the Cold War.

Three years later though, the Bolognese administration tried to resume constructive dialogue with its radical and creative community. As it will be accounted for in Chapter 7 of the present work, the action of the administration involved punk, both at local and international level. This political initiative had long lasting consequences under various respects: it influenced the future cultural politics of the PCI, it contributed to the development of the Italian punk scene, it helped shaping the cultural identity -and the subcultural status- of Bologna to the present day. Through this relationship with both extra-parliamentary and institutional politics, punk was somehow integrated into the public life of the Bolognese territory: in this way it has managed to leave a lasting mark on the wider local community.

The Time Frame: Bolognese Punk and the *Riflusso* Years

I have decided to limit the time frame of my research to the period between 1977 and 1980 for the following reasons: there was no detectable punk activity in Italy before the first months of 1977 and 1980 was the year in which the first threads of the Anarcho-punk network were established in Bologna. From the early 1980s, Anarcho-punk and hardcore, will soon become the two dominating trends in Italian punk, thus gradually displacing the early scene and realigning the Italian underground with the contemporary international punk movement (Gilardino, 2017).

1977 is also traditionally associated with the beginning the *Riflusso* phase of the Long Seventies. According to this periodisation, after the demise of the *Movimento del 77*, the radical movement reached a standstill caused by internal divisions, violent state repression, an ambivalent position towards terrorism and a generalised sense of fatigue following the

many disappointments of the previous years. During the *Riflusso* many former militants retreated into the private sphere or embraced alternative lifestyles which did not necessarily imply direct political commitment. Furthermore, the failed perspective of a mass revolutionary effort pushed several members of the extra-parliamentary front towards clandestine armed struggle. In fact, the *Riflusso* years did not coincide with a softening of the climate of social polarisation and ideological tension in the country, on the contrary: the years between 1977 and 1980 saw an increase in terrorist activity and political violence. Moreover, as a result of years of ferocious ideological debate, the Italian population found itself divided across almost every aspect of everyday life. Personal choices in musical consumption, private relationships and even clothing had been assigned an ideological connotation which augmented the sense of entrenchment of the Italians and sometimes ignited episodes of intolerance and violence. Towards the end of the 1970s, politically motivated aggressions in schools, universities, clubs, bars, music venues and even private homes became increasingly frequent. In this heavy climate, early punks were often on the receiving end of attacks due to their provocative appearance and perceived political ambiguity. The punk subculture manifested itself exactly at the beginning of the *Riflusso* phase of the Long Seventies: the first punk rock performance in Bologna was held within the musical program of the *Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione*[9]*,* a national gathering of the *Movimento* which ratified its internal divisions and, according to many militants, signaled the 'official' beginning of the *Riflusso.*

It can be argued that, by the late seventies, political violence in Italy had become a ritualistic, tribalised affair: a circle of brutality which seemed only interested in perpetuating itself, having abandoned any perspective for effective social change. The effectiveness of the traditional strategy of the Italian radical front was now put into question from different sides. Both the imaginative approach to protest of the *Ala Creativa* and the encompassing critique expressed by the Feminist movement were signals of a new sensitivity which the orthodox categories of Italian Marxist radicalism were not able to channel anymore. It is my claim that early punk should be considered as one of the

[9] The *Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione* (National Conference on Repression), held in Bologna in September 1977, was a national gathering of the Leftist movement called to devise new strategies to face the increasing state repression of protests.

symptoms of this wider crisis of representation as well as an expression of a widespread desire to overcome the dynamics of ideologically motivated violence which were affecting the life of many young Italians.

Since the second post-war period, the Marxist Left had taken a leading role in the national intellectual debate. Strongly influenced by Gramscian ideas of cultural hegemony, the *PCI* leadership understood culture could be a powerful weapon to overcome its political isolation within the Italian institutional settlement. To reach this goal the Italian Marxists could count on the support of a large share of the country's artists, academics and intellectuals: thanks to these allies, sympathy for Communist ideas was fostered and reinforced among Italian public opinion. In the national debate, the voice of the Left was the voice of culture, progress and modernisation. The left-wing intellectual hegemony was particularly effective in the field of modern and contemporary culture: a field over which both the nation's leading political force - the Democratic Christian Party (*Democrazia Cristiana* or *DC*) - and the parliamentary post-Fascist right had left free reign to the Marxist camp and its supporting intellectuals. As a result, acceptance or rejection from the Italian Marxist left could significantly influence the national perception of the political and intellectual status of cultural products. In the immediate post-war period though, the official *PCI* line towards mass culture was rather dismissive: pop music in particular was considered one of the many faces of capitalist consumerism and, in the case of jazz and rock and roll, American imperialism.

Nevertheless, from the mid-1960s interest for jazz, rock, blues and folk started growing among Italy's Marxist youth. Furthermore, in the post-1968 climate North American rock culture and its anti-authoritarian stance became one of the main cultural preoccupations among many young left-wing activists. Free music festivals and concerts were held alongside marches and political gatherings. Rock, folk and jazz music were discussed and analysed in public meetings, political magazines and radio shows. Pop rock lyrics were attentively scrutinised and the ideological consistency of bands and musicians was questioned and debated regularly. Criticism of the popular music industries as a capitalist superstructure was at the basis of Italian approach to popular music analysis. One of the most visible expressions of this materialistic critique of the music industries was the

Autoriduzione movement: according to these radical militants, music was the product of proletarian labour and therefore it had to be distributed to the working classes at affordable prices or for free. Re-distribution included access to live concerts. Picketing and attempts at breaking into venues by the *Autoriduttori* and other forms of protest against the live music industry led to a long series of grave incidents at concerts. These episodes happened at shows by many Italian musicians as well as international acts such as Led Zeppelin, Santana, Jethro Tull and Lou Reed. During the incidents urban warfare tactics were often employed both by the protesters and by the riot police: rock music venues soon became another battlefield in the Italian ideological struggle of the times. As a result, many international rock bands and artists avoided Italy during the 1970s (Rossi, 2018). In the post 1968 climate, Italy was not the only country in which rock fans had been protesting the live music industry: however, while protests at rock concerts began to wane in other western countries throughout the 1970s, in Italy these episodes continued until the early 1980s. Furthermore, the Italian protest movement against the live music industry was created, structured and supported by an ideological and organisational framework deeply rooted in the socio-political context of the country.

The violent political polarisation of Italian society soon influenced the national perception of foreign music trends and subcultures. The cultural analysis categories of the Italian left did belong to transnational Marxist theory but were adapted to the violent ideological divisions which characterised the country in the second half of the 1970s, as it will be argued in the fourth chapter of this dissertation. In the criticism of international subcultural styles this insular approach was applied to clothing, hairstyles and musical taste. The juxtaposition of Marxist critique and localist gaze also characterised the approach of the newborn specialised music press: in fact, many of the first Italian rock journalists and magazine editors were active *Movimento* members or sympathisers. As it will be demonstrated in the fifth chapter of the present work, this influenced the initial - and generally negative - approach of the Italian music press to punk, which was often accused of Fascism, nihilism and counter-revolutionary attitudes. In such a politically tense scenario, where politics and music where inextricably linked, the approach of the music press certainly influenced the negative response to this emerging subculture by a large share of the *Movimento*.

With its nihilistic attitude, primitive musical articulations and problematic paraphernalia, punk fell right in the middle of a context in which political ambiguity might lead to a wide range of hostile reactions: these reactions ranged from cultural and political ostracism to actual physical violence from members of the radical movement. This is why the only way for punk to survive in the Italian context was through some form of acceptance by the *Movimento* itself, or at least by some elements of it. Bologna, with its creative, sarcastic and imaginative approach to political struggle offered a safe harbour to the first Italian punks: by doing so it enabled its own punk scene to produce some of the most significant early articulations of this subculture. Even in its most individualistic and sarcastic expressions, the Bolognese *Movimento* always kept a collectivist perspective which early punk did not appear to possess: nevertheless, it can be argued that several elements within the *Ala Creativa* of the Bolognese movement were already expressing that criticism of violent ideological polarisation and political orthodoxy which early punk's nihilistic and obnoxious approach seemed to embody so 'naturally'. Furthermore, as it will be argued in the seventh chapter of the present work, the cultural operators of the administration effectively contributed to the acceptance of punk music by the wider local community in ways which set Bologna apart from other Italian contexts.

Main Research Questions

I would like to briefly introduce the main research questions which I have been answering with this thesis. One of the essential questions was determining if the early Bolognese scene had specific characteristics which set it apart from other politically leading cities of the Long Seventies. As I tried to satisfy the above-mentioned question, reconstructing the early steps of the scene through analysis of primary sources and the collection of oral histories became a necessary step, due to the absence of encompassing 'Bologna punk histories'. Another question concerns how much the acceptance by the political sphere – in its widest sense – was crucial factor for the popularity of any rock-related sub-culture in late Seventies in Italy. Bologna is a very good example of how the alliances which punk was able to establish within the creative wing of the radical Movement were essential to the development of the local early scene. A crucial question is if a wider and more accurate understanding of the Italian late-seventies approach to popular culture can be achieved by

analysing Italy's response to early punk at local and national level. Criticism of early Italian punk was imbued with the ideological structures of the time and fueled by local political diatribes: this work represents a contribution to studies on the Italian cultural debate by focusing on reactions to the punk subculture. Finally, another question which my work is trying to answer is if, by applying academic concepts to early Italian punk for the first time, a new contribution can be made to international literature on punk by focusing on punk in Italy and in Bologna.

Structure of the Thesis

In order to demonstrate how the fortunes of Bolognese punk were connected to the political climate of the times, I will begin by locating my work within the context of the existing studies about punk and, in particular, about the peripheral appropriations of this subculture. I will also present publications which have analysed the cultural production of the Long Seventies. In order to assess the contribution that this work can bring to research in the field of popular cultural studies on Italian contemporary society, a review of the contemporary literature about punk and its historical context is a necessary step. Chapter 3 will present and discuss the methodologies which I have been making use of during my field research. Due to the scarcity of secondary literature about early Italian punk, information about the subject had to be searched through sources of very heterogenous nature. Many of these sources were primary and available on outdated formats. I often had to rely on narrative enquiry with members of the punk scene. For all the above-mentioned reasons I had to combine different methodologies to carry out my research: I will argue the merits and the shortcomings of each method when applied to my subject and to my on-field experience.

In chapter 4, I will provide a brief outline of the socio-political context of late-seventies Italy: this is a crucial step towards a clearer awareness of the climate in which punk rock made its first appearance on the Italian territory. I will also outline the cultural politics of Italy's Marxist left, from the second post-war period until the late seventies.

In chapter 5 I will move on to analyse the approach of the Italian press and national television to early punk, as it will be demonstrated that public discourse on punk was influential on the reception of this subculture also at local level. Chapter 6 will be dedicated to the beginnings of the Bolognese scene and its relationship with the *Movimento del 77*.

Chapter 7 will look at the attempts by the local government to capitalise on Bologna's status as a leading punk city. This has caused a reaction from the local punk community which was one of the igniting factors for the shift from early punk to the following Anarcho-punk and hardcore scenes. In chapter eight I will briefly compare the punk scenes of Milan and Rome with the Bolognese one. Bologna, Milan and Rome are by no means the only urban centres to have produced early examples of Italian punk, but they do present distinctive approaches and attitudes towards the subculture. According to each city's specific geographical, economic, political and social context, communities responded differently to the genre and produced their peculiar take (or multiple takes) on it. Moreover, various degrees of interaction, especially among the Milan and Bologna scenes, have emerged from different sources: these early contacts led to the establishment of networks which later proved as crucial assets for the development of the punk underground. Moreover, covering other local scenes helps locate Bologna in the larger Italian context: the peculiarity of the Bolognese case could not be explained otherwise. Finally, this comparative chapter could inspire further research on early Italian punk at national level, as it will be argued in the conclusions of the present work.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

My analysis of early Bolognese punk relies on academic and non-academic (both primary and secondary) sources as well as on the wide range of socio-cultural research which has put the Italian Long Seventies at the centre of its interests. I will also build on pre-existing literature about punk in Italy. The production of secondary literature about Italian punk has been focused almost exclusively on the 1980s, a decade which was dominated by the Anarcho-punk and hardcore developments of this musical style and subculture. Nevertheless, since the second half of the 1990s, a new interest for pre-Anarcho and pre-hardcore Italian punk has emerged, albeit initially only at genre enthusiast level. In the course of the present chapter, we will see how this has enabled the publication of some texts and secondary sources dedicated to early Italian and Bolognese punk: these books, music compilations, video documentaries and magazine articles – albeit not numerous – have at least acknowledged the existence of early articulations of punk in Italy. They have also provided a mapping of the most significant social scenes and identified early punk artifacts within the cultural production of the late 1970s.

The field of academic literature mirrors the traditional preference for the 'second-wave' which characterises journalistic literature about Italian punk: specific research about these scenes has been conducted by scholars such as Giacomo Bottà (2015) and Beppe De Sario (2009), among others. On the other hand, first-wave punk has rarely been subject of detailed research. However, early Italian punk is often times mentioned in studies which are analysing the artistic output of the *Movimento del 1977* on a wider level. In this type of studies, punk is mainly seen as just one of the artistic articulations adopted by *post-Movimento* Italian youth towards the end of the 1970s. In particular, the Bolognese scene is referred to as one of the most powerful examples of how the artistically-minded branches of the 1977 Italian radical Movement were able to incorporate elements of the punk aesthetic and discourse into their expressive outputs.

These studies tend to fall short in their analysis of punk mostly because they never abandon the point of view of the *Movimento.* In most of these texts there is a tendency towards not recognising the elements which set punk apart from other subcultural enactments of the late 1970s. Moreover, these works do not recognise how much punk was developing

outside of the explicitly political area, creating new spaces for expression and articulation for a fringe of Italy's youth. Only in very recent times, contributions by Mara Persello (2016) and Alessia Pasini (2018, 2019) have started focusing on the early appropriation of punk in Italy as a subject worthy of research and undivided attention.

These broad sources about the artistic and musical identity of the 1977 Movement are necessary to locate punk in its cultural context. In the Long Seventies, ideology was dominating the public discourse about popular culture: this was particularly evident in Bologna where political struggle was intertwined with artistic and musical articulation due to the nature of the local movement. This is why I will still be relying on cultural studies of the 1977 Movement, regardless of their ability to assess punk in its (sub)cultural specificity. Due to its peculiar positioning within the Italian political scenario and its leading role in the *Movimento del 1977*, Bologna has been the subject of several research studies about the Long Seventies: I will take advantage of this body of work to better define the conditions in which punk started to take root in Italy.

As an international subculture, punk has been analysed in-depth and extensively written about within the fields of sociology, art, politics, media and popular music studies. In the present chapter, we will see how the findings of this long-standing tradition of academic research can be applied to the early Italian and Bolognese appropriation of punk.

Outside academia, punk has inspired a vast array of publications: personal memoirs, scene reconstructions, journalistic features and cyclical critical re-assessments of this subculture's musical, cultural and political legacy are available to the general public. I will briefly analyse some of the most important books about punk, trying to identify the main narrative traditions through which common knowledge about it has been popularized, using four main categories of texts. I have grouped the written sources from which I will be drawing from into the following broad sections:

1. Socio-Political and Cultural Sources about the Long Seventies

The Italian Long Seventies and the *Riflusso* years have been the subject of studies in different disciplinary fields. I will review the texts which have been useful in the making of the present work, as tools for contextualising punk in the Italian socio-political reality of the late 1970s. In this section, I have also included some non-scientific publications which

I consider relevant to a better understanding of the cultural climate of the times. Furthermore, some of these texts do mention punk as one of the expressive outputs of the *Movimento del 77* during the *Riflusso* years.

2. Academic Literature about Punk

I will introduce the main scientific approaches to research on punk at international level and discuss in which ways they have been relevant for my own work.

Particular attention will be given to studies on the peripheral appropriations of this subculture and on the relationship between punk and the political sphere. I will explain how several key academic concepts – such as authenticity, genre, gender, locality and music industries – are called into play by research questions concerning Bolognese punk.

3. Non-academic Sources about Italian Punk

I have listed and reviewed the most significant non-academic works on early Italian punk. This section includes texts which are covering the entire Italian scene (or multiples local scenes) and as well as sources dedicated to Bologna. I have also taken into-account some relevant sources about the Milanese and Roman scenes.

4. International Non-Academic Sources about Punk

To the present day, punk continues to be one of the most popular subjects for music writers and journalists. Biographies, scene memoirs, histories of clubs, records and performers are published regularly. I will briefly review the most important works which have established the main literary narratives about punk, thus contributing to its subcultural status. This section will mirror the section about Italian non-academic histories of punk, but it will look at foreign literature about this subculture.

In the conclusion to the present chapter, I will summarise how these texts have been relevant to my research. I will also explain how my work seeks to fill a void in critical analysis and theoretical work about the first wave of Italian and Bolognese punk.

1) Socio-Political and Cultural Sources about the Long Seventies

Historical and cultural studies on contemporary Italy will constitute the contextual backbone of my research. The entire Long Seventies period has inspired the production of cultural items in every field: academic essay writing, collective memoirs, historical chronicles, interview books, audio and video documentaries, fiction films, TV series, comic books, records and countless magazine, newspaper, radio and TV features.

To the present day, controversies about those years are still alive in Italian society, as national public opinion has not come to a shared assessment of that era yet. The Long Seventies are still an issue of social, political, and academic debate. Sources about Italy's socio-political situation are a necessary tool to understand the peculiar conditions of the country during the Long Seventies. Italy was a former Fascist state: it was a very young nation and an even younger republic. Due to its political instability, it was often compared by analysts to South American countries such as Brazil, Chile and Argentina rather than to other 'fully-developed' Western democracies. It was a NATO ally but it featured the largest Communist party outside of the Socialist world. Despite having severed most of its direct ties with the USSR after the end of the Second World War period, the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (*PCI*) was still the main political reference point for the Socialist bloc in the US-influenced west. Furthermore, since the 1968 mass protest, radical Marxist forces to the left of the *PCI* were pushing for social change and, in some cases, armed revolution: the protest movement involved millions of citizens and resulted in an almost permanent state of social contention between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. This was met with brutal repression from the Italian state and from national and international secret services and organisations which did not hesitate to use ruthlessly illegal means and extremely violent methods to delegitimise the progressive front and further polarise public opinion. The gravity of the political situation and the divisions among the population led to the ideologisation of every aspect of life, including popular music consumption. Within this already peculiar scenario, Bologna was in an even more singular position. Administered by the Communist Party since 1948, Bologna was considered the capital of the Italian left by the country's public opinion. This status did not spare the city from the struggles of the Long Seventies, on the contrary. Experiencing conflict within the ranks of the Left, Bologna developed its own take on the protest. Precisely in 1977, the most creative, artistic and musical wing of the radical Movement would find its leading city in Bologna. We will see

how punk came into play in this complex dynamic between the city and its rebellious youth in chapter 6 and 7 of the present work.

The roots of the Long Seventies lie in the complex fabric of Italy's contemporary history: in this field, established works by Paul Ginsborg (1990), Lanaro (1992) and Crainz (2003) still stand as references for the main events of that time. Within the international academic literature, a collection of essays like Robert Lumley's and Zygmunt Baranski's *Culture and Conflict in Postwar Italy* offers insight into Italian culture, society and politics. The works of John Foot (2003, 2011) must be mentioned as well as they represent an important contribution to the canon of cultural analysis about contemporary Italy. Focusing on Bologna's socio-political status, works such as the already mentioned *Red Bologna* (Jaggi *et al.*, 1977) can provide insight on how the European Marxist Left was looking at the capital city of Italian Communism during the 1970s. The relationship between the Italian Left and popular culture is another underlying issue for the events I am going to analyse. Questions of cultural hegemony as introduced by Antonio Gramsci in his posthumously published works (1947, 1948) lie at the foundation of the Italian Marxist ideology in the second Post War period. The numerous intellectuals who embraced Marxism in Post-War Italy often functioned as connectors between the *PCI* and popular culture. For this reason, the works of Ajello (1992) and Vittoria (2014) about the relationship between the Communist party and the Italian intellectuals have been particularly useful for an understanding of this crucial cultural and political intersection. Moreover, the internal struggles of the Long Seventies determined a further shift in the cultural politics of the Marxist left. This historical phase saw the rise of extra-parliamentary formations to the left of the *PCI* as the most advanced providers of information and analysis on popular culture. The works of Balestrini and Moroni (2011), Bertante (2005) and Colombo (2012) have looked into the popular cultural habits of the post-1968 Marxist youth and their differences with previous generations of activists.

In the cultural climate of the last decades, the prevailing mediated narration on the Long Seventies has often insisted on the tragic and divisive aspects of this period of Italian contemporary history: hence the popularisation of the journalistic expression *Anni di Piombo* (Years of Lead), as an overarching term to describe a grim and violent climate. In

particular, narratives about the *Riflusso,* from almost all sides of the political spectrum, often took on a condemning and regretful tone: The Left-wing deemed it as the disappointing ending of a period of hope for radical change. The moderate Christian-centre and the right-wing looked back on it as the tragic climax of a period of violence, instability and chaotic socio-political divisions. This widespread negative assessment of the tail ending of the Long Seventies has recently been balanced by more inclusive narratives and research studies. Maud Bracke (2014) has observed that the years of the *Riflusso* have seen the confirmation and the approval of important reforms which had been at the core of Feminist activism throughout the 1970s, such as the promulgation of the law on voluntary termination of pregnancy in 1978. Benadusi (2016) has proposed a new historical assessment of the Italian 1980s too, describing them as a phase in which political activism was reconfigured under different forms, rather than simply abandoned.

It is undeniable though that radical protest was gradually marginalised in the country's public sphere during the 1980s. As the decade progressed, ideological struggle found itself confined in spaces which were located at the margins of Italian society. This process was mirrored by the contemporary reconfiguration of a large section of the punk scene within the international Anarcho-punk underground. By the mid-1980s, the politicised punks and the activists found themselves sharing the spaces where radicalism was still practiced such as the *Centri Sociali* circuit. Despite its specific subcultural characteristics, the new politically-conscious wave of punk was now recognisable by other Italian radical movements as a potential ally due to ideological affinities. In the 1980s, punk music became one of the expressive languages of radical protest: several political spaces which had been uninterested or hostile to first wave punk became regular venues for anarcho and hardcore bands. The *Centri Sociali* circuit became synonymous with the Anarcho and hardcore punk venue network and several squatting experiences all over Italy were started – or taken over – by punks.

2) Academic Literature about Punk

A vast body of work on punk has been produced in the field of international academic literature. Since the late 1970s, punk has been thoroughly investigated and problematised. The academic works which I am about to review in this section have constituted the theoretical groundings of my research. I will make use of the main academic approaches to

punk, albeit highlighting the shortcomings of some of these studies when applied to the Italian case.

In the field of international academic literature about punk, a growing interest can be detected for the peripheral appropriations of this subculture. With regard to Italian punk, the production of scientific material is still limited. Moreover, the interest of academics has focused mostly on the 1980s Anarcho or hardcore punk scene. Giacomo Bottà's essay on the *Collettivo Punx Anarchici* in Turin included in the collection *Fight Bac*k (2015) explores the interaction between the political and subcultural identities in the experience of the local punks during the first half of the 1980s. In Bottà's analysis, this dynamic is playing against the backdrop of an industrial city, Turin, which was facing a gradual decline of its central role in the Italian productive system due to the crisis of heavy industry.

In recent years, Alessia Masini (2018, 2019) has taken another step towards a partial re-consideration of the tail-end of the Long Seventies which is mirrored in the field of socio-cultural studies about Italy. In Masini's case, this is done by including punk – and specifically Anarcho-punk – among the progressive forces which are contradicting defeatist narratives about the *Riflusso.* Punk, Masini argues, continued the struggle of the *Movimento* for the modernisation of Italian society throughout the 1980s. According to Masini, Anarcho-punk was *'a laboratory for the reinvention of radical activism in the 1980s* (2018, p. 203), as opposed to late seventies punk which is described as being largely a *'consumerist phenomenon'* (ibid.). While her assessment of Anarcho-punk is certainly commendable, Masini's dismissal of the first wave of Italian punks falls back into the traditional under appreciation of this scene by other Italian cultural analysts and journalists. Masini does recognise the widespread desire for a way out from the country's political and cultural entrenchment which punk was able to channel, but she fails to fully acknowledge the disruptive power intrinsically connected with early punk's political and behavioural ambiguity in the context of late seventies Italy. Masini's analysis of the relationship between punk and politics is expanded on her 2019 book *Siamo Nati da Soli: Punk, Rock e Politica in Italia e in Gran Bretagna (1977-1984)*: the volume is a comparative study of the relationship between punk and politics in Italy and the United Kingdom between 1977 and 1984. In Masini's words, punk was one of the ways in which political engagement was reconfigured, rather than abandoned, in the early 1980s:

> *[…] Thanks to punk it is possible to see beyond the borders of Italian national historiography which, until now, have described the Eighties in terms of Riflusso, of 'ending of the political dimension', of 'failed country' and, in particular, of disappearance of the young people from the political and public scene.* (Masini 2019, p. 10)

In this passage, Masini is referring to some of the most common key expressions which have been associated with a negative assessment of the Long Seventies. According to her analysis, punk is part of that phase of 'reinvention of the political' (Bracke, 2014), which included Feminism, and which has been neglected by conventional narratives about the *Riflusso*. Nevertheless, it is through these acquired similarities, rather than its early days differences, with the tradition of Italian radicalism that punk was finally recognised as a progressive force by Left-wing activists. My argument is that punk managed to thrive throughout the 1980s precisely on the grounds of its acceptance by the political sphere. This acceptance was not granted to the first wave of this subculture: if punk had continued to speak in politically ambiguous terms it would have never conquered its own space within Italy's radical front and it would have never enjoyed any popularity. Interestingly, it is precisely through the above-mentioned contraction of widespread political engagement in Italian mass society that punk and the remains of the *Movimento* found themselves sharing a similar political – and often physical – space. In the early eighties, the radical sphere was gradually moving towards a subcultural status: that is when it encountered punk, which had been going through a political 'reinvention' and was already situated within the same marginal area of Italian society. Masini's work is the most significant contribution to academic research on Italian punk: nevertheless, her focus is on the role which punk has played in the reconfiguration of political activism in early 1980s Italy. As it is customary in the tradition of Italian studies on punk, the attention is devoted mostly to the Anarcho and hardcore punk movements which were undeniably at the core of this socio-political and cultural passage. Before Masini, the most important study on the relationship between Italian punk and political militancy was De Sario's *Resistenze Innaturali* (2009). Inspired by a sociological approach, he focuses on the ways in which political activism was channeled through subcultural identities throughout the 1980s. De Sario examines three local scenes

in the cities of Turin, Rome and Milan. Even more than in Masini's case, the focus is almost entirely on Anarcho and hardcore punk with a brief account of the late-seventies beginnings of this subculture. Nevertheless, De Sario still captures this process of 'subculturisation' of radical politics which has brought punk and the remains of the *Movimento* together.

Studies about the relationship between punk and politics in other areas of the world have helped situate the Italian and Bolognese scene in the context of the international debate on punk. Matthew Worley has dedicated several works to the relationship between punk and politics in Great Britain. His volume *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture, 1976–1984*, (2017) provides for an understanding of the UK context as opposed to the Italian one since the interaction between different levels of the political sphere (local, national and non-institutional) has been a key factor in the development of the local punk subculture in Bologna.

From this perspective, Worley's collaboration with Street and Wilkinson (2018) brings insight on the impact of punk on institutional politics in the UK, a subject which has been often left to mythologisation and hagiographical narratives. Works by John Street (1993) and Simon Frith (1993) about the relationship between subcultures and institutional politics both at national and local level, have also been at the foundation of my analysis of the Bolognese scene, as I will introduce the role that institutional politics – and not just radical activism – have played in shaping the nature of the local punk scene.

The rise of international politically motivated bands was fundamental for the repositioning of punk within the Italian counter cultural scene. Bands like Dead Kennedys and Crass were highly influential on the second wave on early Italian punk. In Bologna, a group of punks were directly galvanised and inspired by Anarcho-punk collective Crass, with their embracement of Anarchism and their DIY ethics and practices: as it will be demonstrated in chapter 7, the Bolognese punks were at the core of this important process of change for the appreciation and, I suggest, survival of the punk subculture in Italy. This is why secondary literature and studies about Crass and their approach to Anarchism, punk and DIY (Glasper 2014, Berger 2008, Pete 2014, Worley and Lohman 2018) have been important sources for a deeper understanding of the characteristics of this new wave of punk and

how they applied to the Italian context. In this respect the contributions of Marco Philopat (2010), even if not ascribable to the field of scientific literature, offer insight into the relationship between traditional Italian Anarchism and the sub-cultural adaptation of this ideology by second wave Italian punk. Background about the history of Italian Anarchism has been provided by encompassing sources such as Berti and De Maria's volume *L'Anarchismo Italiano Storia e Storiografia* (2016). The book has significative sections about Bologna, a city which was almost taken over by an Anarchist *coup* in 1848, hosted the Anarchist national congress in 1920 and, to this day, features five active Anarchist circles.

There are different theoretical approaches to punk within the canon of Popular music studies. Here I will focus on three texts which exemplify some of these approaches. I will try to assess their place in the current academic debate and their relevance to the subject of my work.

The Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies has produced some of the earliest research work on punk. For a long time, Dick Hebdige's 1979 book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* has been one of the most influential studies on punk. Hebdige's influence can be detected in the approach of Italian scholar Beppe De Sario (2009) who draws heavily on the concept of 'resistance through rituals' which has been popularised by CCCS scholars (1975). Nevertheless, Hebdige's work has attracted criticism from the academic community throughout the years, due to some perceived methodological flaws. In particular, his tendency to single out the individual experiences of the most visible members of the punk subculture rather than weaving together a collective narrative and his general underestimation of the role of large but under represented social groups, such as women, have been put under a problematic light (McRobbie, 1980). Furthermore, the CCCS definition of 'subculture' has been criticised for its lack of subtlety in analyising the complex relationship between youth groups and consumerism (Clarke, 1981). Even the term 'subculture' itself has been put into question repeatedly for its implied social rigidity. Andy Bennett (1999), building on the work of sociologist Michel Maffesoli (1996), has proposed the adoption of the term 'tribes' or 'neo-tribes': according to Bennett the term 'neo-tribes' implies a more fluid understanding of the social interactions among young people than

'subcultures'. David Hesmondhalgh (2005) has rejected both terms in favour of a dynamic idea of 'genre' and 'articulation' which are, according to his analysis, more appropriate for studying music-related social groups.

Despite the numerous issues which it raises, I consider Hebdige's work still valid for my purposes, especially with regard to his assessment of the active role played by mass media in the creation and diffusion of subcultural styles. I also embrace Hebdige's definition of subcultures as mechanisms of 'semantic disorder' (1979, p. 90): this definition can be certainly applied to the disturbing effect that early Italian punk provoked at the time. The 'semantic disorder' concept also establishes a bridge between Hebdige himself and Dave Laing's semiotics-based approach to punk. Laing's 1985 study *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock*, still stands as a groundbreaking work for its focus on questions of connotation in punk. I will build on Dave Laing's attention to issues of semiotics and meaning in punk, especially regarding punk's aesthetic nihilism and its impact on the Italian radical scene. However, in Laing's work the rise of punk has been mainly projected against a backdrop of traditional politics and mainstream public opinion. In the Italian and Bolognese context, controversies about punk were experienced mostly within the *milieu* of radical leftist politics, rather than in mainstream culture where punk was marginalised and disregarded as a novelty trend. In more recent times, another approach to research about punk has been suggested by scholar Nick Crossley in his book *Networks of Sound: The Punk and Post-Punk world of Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield, 1975-1980.* By mixing quantitative analysis and a relational approach, Crossley offers an intriguing perspective on how local music scenes can thrive thanks to a complex network of social interactions. As the accounts of many musicians and witnesses reveal, microsocial dynamics did play a very important role in creating what Crossley calls '*collective effervescence'* (Crossley, p. 96) around punk in the UK. Crossley's ambition is also to fill a specific gap in knowledge about the reasons why certain cities are more receptive than others when it comes to reacting to or even ignite new musical styles, subcultures and genres. However, his findings cannot be systematically applied to the Italian context. Italian punk was a very tiny affair, in strictly demographical terms, and individual or small group interactions have been certainly essential to the development of its very early scene. Nevertheless, the web of social interactions of the first punk scene was not exclusively confined within the boundaries of

the punk circuit, on the contrary: the social network of the Bolognese early punks was heavily "contaminated" by personal histories, political ideas, class, gender and a number of external factors which escape the somehow mechanical action/reaction dynamic that a tight social network approach implies.

An analysis of early Italian and Bolognese punk calls into question some several debated concepts in social, media and cultural studies. Questions of Locality, Authenticity, Genre, Gender and Music Industries are all essential to understand the first steps of punk in Italy. I will now briefly summarise the debate about these key concepts and explain how they have informed my analysis of Bolognese punk.

- **Locality**

The works of scholars such as Sarah Cohen (1999) and Will Straw (1991, 1997) about locality and the issues it implies (ideas of local scenes, music communities, theories of creative cities, musical identities, networks, musical pathways) have helped me build the basis of my analysis of the local punk scene in Bologna, as well as the ones in Milan and Rome. Nevertheless, these scholars mostly deal with the Anglo-American context, thus underlying a problem which affected the early years of Popular Music Studies research about punk: a lack of scientific contribution on the ways in which punk has been appropriated and reconfigured outside of the Western English-speaking world. In recent years though, academic research on the appropriations of punk in 'peripheral' countries has significantly progressed. Meetings like the annual *Keep It Simple Make It Fast (KISMIF) International Conference* in Porto have contributed to the acceleration of studies about punk in several contexts outside the Anglophone world. In this field, important contributions have been provided by scholars like Paula Guerra (2014, 2015) with her research work on Portuguese punk and Mara Persello (2016) who has investigated the appropriation of punk in Germany and Italy. Works on late-seventies punk and post punk in continental Europe and specifically in a former Fascist country like Germany, have been produced by Shanan (2011) and Watson (1993): these two contributions offer interesting perspectives on the interplay between punk rock, Marxist politics and political violence in late seventies DDR and Germany's Federal Republic. Similar dynamics were crucial and perhaps even more

dramatic in the Italian reality of the 1970s and played an essential role in the reaction to punk, both within the political milieu and the mediated public discourse.

Emma Baulch's chapter about the Indonesian death metal subculture (2003) represents another approach which delves into how international music genres can be appropriated and reworked in a social and cultural environment with very different characteristics from the countries in which those same styles have originated from. Baulch's work is particularly relevant to my subject because it investigates the inherent political implications of subcultural styles rather than their outspoken ideological positioning in a 'peripheral' context such as Indonesia. Her findings constitute a theoretical basis for a reassessment of the significance of first wave 'nihilistic' punk as opposed to the later more politically conscious enactments of the same subcultural style.

- **Authenticity**

Baulch's work on the metal subculture in Indonesia also deals with another key issue in contemporary cultural studies: the notion of authenticity. According to Simon Frith:

> *The rock aesthetic depends, crucially, on an argument about authenticity… Rock criticism depends on myth - the myth of the youth community, the myth of the creative artist…The myth of authenticity is, indeed, one of rock's own ideological effects, an aspect of its sales process: rock stars can be marketed as artists and their particular sounds marketed as a means of identity* (1987: 136/7).

Therefore, any style in rock music must be perceived as 'authentic' by its audience in order to be accepted and embraced. In the national media, early Italian appropriations of punk was often accused of being a novelty phenomenon and of lacking authenticity. On a general level, the debate on authenticity is a recurring one in Italian popular music journalism, especially for those genres and subcultures which are perceived as belonging exclusively to the Anglo-American cultural sphere. This criticism originates from a popular idea which maintains that Italians cannot – or should not – play rock music or adhere to rock/pop related subcultural trends, on the grounds that these styles are alien to the country's cultural heritage. Moreover, bands who sing in English are often dismissed as particularly

'inauthentic' by some music critics and by many listeners. Notions of cultural imperialism, nationalism, traditionalism, the influence of powerful local music industries and a widespread perception of Italy as a peripheral and not entirely developed Western democracy – both in cultural and political terms - all concur in fueling a debate which is still ongoing. In this respect, the criticism of ideologies of authenticity in the assessment of rock music by Popular Music scholars such as Frith (1987, 1996), Middleton (1990), Grossberg (1993), Huxley (1999), Zuberi (2001) and Moore (2002) is an instrument for understanding some of the causes for the dismissal of early Italian punk.

- **Genre**

Issues of perceived authenticity – or 'inauthenticity' – are intimately connected with ideas on genre in Popular Music Studies. Punk was at the centre of debates about its collocation in terms of genre within the canon of pop rock music. At the same time, punk determined a proliferation of genres and sub-genres which were characterised by diverging musical articulations, variations on the look and, in the case of Anarcho-punk, different approaches to politics. The concept of genre in popular music has been researched by, amongst others, Franco Fabbri (1980), Simon Frith (2002) and Keith Negus (2003, 2008). Borrowing from Neale (1980) and Fabbri, Negus suggests that the need to assign a genre to music – and to the subcultures which are connected to it – is determined by social expectations and conventions rather than by the intrinsic features of a specific musical text. In my analysis of the Bolognese scene, I will highlight how these dynamics have played a role in the ways in which the local punk scene was perceived and described not only by the media and public opinion but even by its own members.

- **Gender**

According to Frith (1980), questions of genre also determine gender demarcations in terms of audience participation and personal involvement. The early punk scene seemed to have partially avoided those hindrances: for instance, punk was the first rock related subculture in which women were visibly playing an active role. According to Laura Carroli – drummer for Anarcho-punk band RAF PUNK - in the early days of the Bolognese scene *'there were*

more girls than boys…and the boys certainly did not look like your typical Italian man'. [10] Moreover, the androgynous elements of the early punk style appealed to many identities in transition and, more broadly, to individuals who did not adhere to binary and heteronormative ideas of gender. Questions of gender representation in rock related subcultures and particularly in punk have been attentively scrutinised by scholars recently: one of the latest examples is the book *Revenge of the She Punks: A feminist Music History from Poly Styrene to Pussy Riot* (Goldmann, 2019) in which punk is seen through a Feminist perspective as well as through the histories of some of its female flag bearers and fans.

Issues of masculinity, ageism and gender representation both in the UK as well as in peripheral punk scenes have been investigated in essay collections such as *Fight Back: Punk, Politics and Resistance* (2014), especially through the contributions of Hilary Pilkington and Laura Way. Moreover, one of the leading themes of the 2019 edition of the *Keep it Simple Make it Fast* conference in Porto was gender representation and diversity of participation in punk: this produced several stimulating contributions from all over the world, thus enriching the scientific debate and bringing fresh perspectives on these issues. Finally, non-academic books such as the personal memoirs of the Slits guitarist Viv Albertine (2014) have provided first person accounts and insight about the female experience in the early UK punk scene. These sources are offering terms of comparison and analysis for the many questions about gender that early Italian punk brought forward in the late seventies: the mixed social composition and the polysexual approach of the early punk scene was questioning Italy's traditional culture whose conservative influence sometimes affected even the *Movimento del 77* and its activists.

- **Music Industries**

The rise of the Bolognese punk scene confirms how, according to Williamson and Cloonan (2007), we should define the complex economy which originates from the production of popular music as *Music Industries* (plural) as opposed to the commonly used singular definition of *Music Industry*. Williamson and Cloonan describe the widespread notion which tends to identify this term with the physical production of recordings as especially misleading because '*…it suggests simplicity where there is complexity and homogeneity*

[10] Carroli, L., interview with author, 20.10.2017, Bologna

where there is diversity' (2007, p. 305): this stress on the diversity of the economy which originates from popular music is particularly meaningful in order to understand the fortunes of the Bolognese scene in the late 1970s. In Bologna, there were no record printing facilities and no important record labels, but the city had enormous sub-cultural capital, a growing community of artists and performers, and a sub-stratum of creative workers (sound engineers, street artists, painters, and comic writers) who could support and magnify the impact of the music produced *in loco*.

According to Hesmondhalgh *'The organic intellectuals of post-punk inherited the 60s counterculture's romantic opposition of art to commerce but added to it a recognition of the politics of musical production and circulation - the problem of getting products to audiences'* (2015, p. 4). At the time of announcing the birth of Italian Records, the first punk-inspired label in Bologna, Oderso Rubini declared that '*the time has come to move into a new industrial age, after the time of innocence and weaning*' (Rubini, 2019, p. 127). Rubini was referring to his label's beginnings as an idealistic multimedia laboratory which was documenting the cultural and political activities of the Movimento: his quote perfectly encapsulates a change of ethos as well as a new desire to control each aspect of musical production and distribution which was taking direct inspiration from UK labels such as Rough Trade and Cherry Red.

Indeed, the rise of the punk scene resulted in the need of providing the Bolognese community with infrastructures which, in the 1970s, were not available locally. As mentioned above, the first punk-inspired independent record labels were founded. New music venues were born, thus expanding the live music economy. Recording studios, rehearsal rooms, record shops and even music instrument retail shops were opened. Some record shops eventually became international distributors. Even the local administration started to invest in music, for political and financial purposes. Finally, record pressing factories were established, but this was only the last stage of the growth of Bologna as a city of musical production. Without a conception of *Music Industries* which is looking at all the different activities which stem from popular music, it is impossible to understand the development of the Bolognese scene from, and beyond, the early punk years. Hesmondalgh's work on the UK post-punk scene (1997) and its financial and economic

structure has provided the grounds for a concept of the independent music business as a part of the market rather than an alternative to it.

3) Non-Academic Sources about Italian Punk

Collecting, storing and analysing primary and mixed media sources about Italian punk has constituted an important part of my research. Indeed, one of the crucial aspects that my work had to engage with was the substantial scarcity of encompassing critical literature about the early stages of punk in Italy. This theoretical gap is, in my view, further proof of the underestimation that Italian musical and youth culture analysts and historians always showed for this genre. On the other hand, many books, documentaries, and detailed accounts about the Italian hardcore and post-punk scenes have been published since the 1990s. A conscious effort towards an assessment of the main features and cultural impact of both Anarcho/hardcore punk and post punk has been produced, leading to the emergence of a vast array of material. In fact, the widespread influence of post punk on Italian rock aesthetics, sentiment and ideology of the last 37 years has been now broadly acknowledged by the Italian independent music scene. In the case of hardcore punk, the influence of the Italian scene on the development of the genre's aesthetics, attitude and sound has been also recognised internationally: this has happened through a process of third person authentication[11] provided by American and British musicians, journalists, and hardcore punk enthusiasts. On a general level, Italian rock fans and journalists tend to dismiss late seventies local punk rock as a sort "preparation" and/or as a mere prologue for the greater post-punk and hardcore movements. Scarce musical production, both in terms of quality and quantity, lack of socio-political focus and its relatively short life span are the most popular arguments in favour of the poor consideration of first-wave Italian punk rock. Nevertheless, histories of post-punk and hardcore are still useful for the purpose of my research as they once again stress and confirm the general attitude towards punk rock that characterised the Italian musical scene since its early stages. Furthermore, the memories of early life-changing musical experiences from the protagonists of both the post-punk and

[11] The concept of third person authentication has been presented and analysed by Allan Moore in 'Authenticity as Authentication', *Popular Music* (2002) Volume 21/2. Cambridge University Press, pp. 209–223.

Anarcho/hardcore punk scenes are very often rooted in their first exposure to late seventies punk rock.

Marco Philopat's[12] book *Lumi di Punk* (2006) is a classic example of memorial literature about the Italian Anarcho-punk and hardcore networks: the volume collects first person accounts and contributions by punks from several Italian cities. Some of the contributors were part of the early Bolognese scene: they experienced and actively participated in the transition towards Crass-influenced Anarcho-punk which interested part of the local scene. Their contributions describe the above-mentioned transition and the complex relationship of the first Bolognese punks with the local political movement. In fact, even if essentially focused on the mid-1980s scene, the contributions to *Lumi di Punk* almost invariably refer to the early punk days: this is often done in order to underline the differences between the old and new approaches to punk and to tell stories about the frequent misunderstandings with the political activists and the general public that Italian punk had to endure in its early days. Marco Philopat's work on the Italian punk hardcore scene also produced the novel *Costretti a Sanguinare*[13], a fictionalised account of the scene in the 1980s. Even if focused on a genre and a time period which is chronologically subsequent to the events covered by my research, these texts are very useful to understand the role that early punk has played in defining the features of Italian hardcore. Furthermore, they retrospectively confirm how the first steps of Italian punk were accompanied by controversies with members of Italy's extra parliamentary left. Another contribution by Marco Philopat is included in the essay collection *DIY Crass Bomb: L'azione diretta nel Punk* (2010): here he describes his personal journey towards Anarcho-punk. His 'conversion' was punctuated by events such as his trip to Bologna on the occasion of the free concert held by The Clash in the city's main square on June 1, 1980. On that occasion he met representatives of the local Anarcho-punk scene who were protesting the show: the Bolognese punks introduced him to Crass-influenced punk and DIY practices.

[12] Marco Philopat is former activist of the Milanese Anarcho-punk managed squat *Virus*. Since the early 2000s, Philopat has been documenting the activities of the eighties Italian Hardcore-punk scene with a series of publications.

[13] Ibid.

Bloody Riot, Ardecore de Roma, 1983-2001 (Perciballi, 2001) is a collection of writings by members of the Roman scene who were directly involved – or gravitated around – the hardcore punk band Bloody Riot. Even if the band did not form before 1982, thus after the time frame which is covered by this research, the personal histories collected in Perciballi's work provide significant details on the earliest articulations of Roman punk in the late 1970s. Since Rome is one of the cities which will be examined as a term of comparison for the Bolognese scene in this dissertation, this text has certainly helped me build a more vivid portrait of the conflicts which accompanied punk's first steps in Italy's capital.

However, since the second half of the 1990s, some journalistic publications have tried to shed light on, or at least map out, the late-seventies Italian punk scene. The new interest for this much maligned and usually ignored music genre can be attributed to the contemporary emergence of several Italian bands who openly declared their musical and attitudinal allegiance to the first wave of international punk rock and to its most obnoxious and politically nihilistic manifestations. The new bands sported names like Transex, Homoplastik, UFO Diktatorz, Assholes: they wished to provoke and irritate rather than spread political messages. With their attitude, the new groups were antagonising the ideologically charged approach of Italian Anarcho-punk and hardcore in favor of a provocative style embodied and predated by a myriad of small first-wave punk bands. Among these sources of inspiration, besides obscure UK and North American groups, there were several bands coming from continental Europe, the former Socialist Bloc and even from Asia. Therefore, rather than fetishising flag-bearing names such as the Sex Pistols or The Clash, most of these bands looked up at groups such as The Kids (Belgium), Pekinska Patka (former Yugoslavia), Razar (Australia) or Stalin (Japan), as well as to lesser known Anglo-American bands like The Pagans (US), La Peste (US), The Cortinas (UK), The Users (UK): all these bands, which had enjoyed very limited popularity even within the punk subculture, were often described by fanzines, musicians and fans as being 'minor punk', as opposed to the well-established 'major punk' of bands like the above-mentioned Sex Pistols. 'Minor punk' compilation series such as *Killed by Death*[14] and the geographically

[14] The *Killed by Death Series* even features and entire volume dedicated to Italian punk: Various Artists [1997] Killed by Death D'Italia [LP] Italy, Redrum

subdivided *Bloodstains Over*… were extremely popular among the new punk groups. Italian independent labels like Hate Records and Rave Up Records became internationally known for reissuing material of 'minor' punk bands from all over the world. All this attention for obscure and 'forgotten' punk rock, led to a reappraisal of Italy's 'minor punk' too. A campaign of reissues soon started and many early Italian bands were rediscovered by contemporary punk fans. One of the compilations which wished to celebrate the new punk bands bore the sarcastic name of '*First Italian Punk Contest: All Italian Punk, No Foreign Junk*', showing a renewed, albeit humorous, pride in the legacy of Italian visceral punk. At first glance, this phenomenon might look like just another trend appealing to a restricted cast of music enthusiasts, perhaps similar to the periodical revivals of sixties garage music. Nevertheless, I am arguing that this return of nihilistic early punk was connected with the contemporary decline in status of hardcore punk as the soundtrack of the Italian front of political activism. Throughout the 1980s, punk became synonymous with politically conscious music in Italy. Anarcho and hardcore punk were tightly connected with the radical activism of the *Centri Sociali*[15] circuit. By the beginning of the 1990s, punk's role as the musical soundtrack of youthful politically conscious protest was being taken over by rap: the tight association between punk and political activism, which had lasted since the early 1980s, was loosened or, at least, punk was not the only language of radical anger anymore. Furthermore, towards the end of the millennium, the importance of *Centri Sociali* as music venues for alternative music began to wane. This set the conditions for a reappraisal of a less openly ideological approach to punk music: in this new space the revival of nihilistic and first wave punk managed to take root.

Besides the record reissues and the magazine features, the first books about late seventies Italian punk started to appear. The publication of Claudio Pescetelli's detailed history of early Italian punk, *Lo Stivale È Marcio* (2013), can be considered as a product of the relatively recent new interest in this subculture. Pescetelli's outspoken intention was to account for the main events connected to late-seventies punk, as well as presenting the

[15] Centri Sociali are politically active squats, which can also be music and performing art venues too. In the 1980s, several *Centri Sociali* were run (or co-run) by Anarcho-punk collectives. The *Centri Sociali* network became the circuit which helped the circulation of politically motivated punk throughout the eighties and until the mid-nineties in terms of concert tours, recording record distribution and, in some cases, recording opportunities.

most important bands and local scenes. The book also offers an overview of the social and political conditions of the country during the second half of the 1970s, thus contextualising punk in his historical period. Moreover, in his self-penned introduction to the volume, the author acknowledges the lack of an accurate assessment and analysis of early punk in narratives about pop/rock in Italy. To this day, for its accuracy and scope, Pescetelli's book can still be considered as the most complete secondary literature source about the first steps of punk in Italy.

Lo Stivale È Marcio was predated by another publication which tried to tell the story of early Italian punk. As an annex to its February 2003 issue, rock magazine *Rumore* distributed a volume titled *Punk Italiano, Prima Parte (1977-1982): Mamma Dammi la Benza* (2003)[16]. Written and edited by journalist, fanzine writer and radio host Luca Frazzi, the book takes time to present the socio-political situation of the late seventies in which Italian punk moved its first steps. It also establishes a clear distinction between the first wave of Italian punk and the subsequent rise of the anarcho and hardcore movements in the 1980s, which Frazzi describes as *'a consequence of punk not an expression of it'* (Frazzi 2003 A, p. 13).

This distinction is underlined by the publication of a separate second volume, also curated by Luca Frazzi, and specifically dedicated to the Anarcho and hardcore scenes. The book, called *Punk Italiano. Parte Seconda: Hardcore. Gli Anni Furiosi (1982* – 1990) was distributed with the July 2003 issue of *Rumore.* Between the years 2004 and 2005, director Angelo Rastelli and Luca Frazzi also assembled a video documentary based on *Punk Italiano, Prima Parte (1977-1982): Mamma Dammi la Benza.* Divided in three episodes[17] and presented by Frazzi himself, the documentary was first aired by cable TV channel Canal Jimmy in June 2005. The documentary features primary source footage and interviews with

[16] *Mamma Dammi la Benza* is a song by Bolognese group Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano (later Gaznevada). Released in September 1977, the song is considered the first recorded example of Italian punk rock.

[17] The three 30 minutes episodes were tiled 'Figli di Odeon (1977-1978)' (aired on June 13), "B.R. Brigate Rock (1979-1980)" (aired on June 20), and 'A come Anarchia (1981-1982)' (aired on June 27).

several scene members, fans and music journalists. To the present day, *Mamma Dammi la Benza* is the only video documentary on early Italian punk.

Other recent works dedicated to early Italian punk are based on collections of primary material or on personal memoirs by scene members or music enthusiasts. I will now present a few examples of this literary production. I consider these publications as relevant to my work as they collect original voices which can facilitate the reconstruction of events and introduce the motivations which pushed some young Italians towards this subculture. A significant share of the original artifacts from the late-seventies punk scene were handmade by scene members or fans. Fanzines, demos, badge and flyers were very rarely reproduced industrially or commercially distributed through mass-market channels. Therefore, most of this material is extremely rare and its contemporary availability for consultation often depends on the personal archives of veterans of the scene or punk collectors. Internet resources have only partially increased accessibility to this material: any in-depth analysis must still rely on private physical archives.

Publications based on primary sources such as *Punk alla Carbonara* by Glezos and Eletttro[18] (1998) were early examples of collections of artifacts from the Italian scene.

Punk alla Carbonara was originally released in 1998 in a limited edition of only a few hundred copies. Its authors were two active members of the Bolognese and Milanese scene. The book collects newspaper clippings, fanzine scans, vintage photos, collages and drawings: the original material is mixed with notes and comments by the authors who are reflecting on their experience as punk activists and scene members since the second half of the seventies. The title is playing on a *double entendre*: *Carbonara* is a well-known Italian pasta recipe, while the *Moti Carbonari* (*Carbonari* Revolts)[19] were the revolts which started the first Italian independence war in the years 1820 and 1821. With their choice of title, the authors are suggesting a form of understatement, qualifying Italian punk as a home-

[18] Glezos (full name unknown) was a member of Milan-based punk bands T.V. Vampire, Girls, the Gags, and the Huns. Eletttro (full name unknown) was a punk DJ in Emilia Romagna and a fanzine editor/writer.

[19] *Carbonaro* is an archaic and regional variation of the word *carbonaio* which means coalman in the Italian language: the *Carbonari* were a secret society - of previous Masonic affiliation - which conspired for the independence and freedom of Italy in the first half 19th century. Their activities led to the Carbonari Revolts of 1820-1821.

cooked, locally adapted version of punk from a nation that is often identified with its culinary tradition. At the same time, they are also ironically commenting on the limited size and cultish nature of the scene: *Carbonaro* in the Italian language also means 'conspirator', with a nuance of elitism. The authors seem to imply that early punk was a subculture for a restricted group of initiated conspirators. Even if imbued with sarcasm and marked by the authors' personal point of view, *Punk alla Carbonara* collects rare primary sources which provide a snapshot of the expressions of the early punk scene in Northern Italy. Since 2018, Glezos has been touring with a spoken word show called *'Papà cos'era il punk'* ('*What was punk, daddy*?'): the show is a monologue based on his archive and his personal experiences as a punk in Italy and in the United Kingdom.[20]

An important addition to primary source-based literature has been recently made by Italian music journalist Stefano Gilardino who, in collaboration with his older brother Fabrizio, has edited a volume called *Il Quaderno Punk, 1979-1981: La Nascita del Nuovo Rock Italiano* (2019). The book is based on a notebook which the teenage Gilardino brothers have been compiling between 1979 and 1981. At the time they were respectively 11 (Stefano) and 18 (Roberto) years old. The notebook was filled with every information, photo, article, playlist that the two brothers were able to find about Italian punk and new wave in the press. This publication is notable because it is the product of two teenage punk fans who were following the mediated narration of the nascent punk (or *nuovo rock* – new rock – as it was often called by the Italian press of the time) mostly from the provincial town of Biella, in the Piedmont region.

Moreover, the amount of space which is dedicated to the Bolognese scene in the *Quaderno del Punk* demonstrates how the subcultural capital of Bologna, heralded as punk's leading city, was already working its charm on the imagination of Italian punk fans.

The works which have been reviewed so far are entirely dedicated to late-seventies Italian punk. Nevertheless, sections on Italy can also be found in secondary literature about punk as an international subculture by national journalists and historians of popular music.

A short chapter about the early days of Italian punk closes Federico Guglielmi's book *Punk!*, a worldwide overview of the first wave (1975-1978) of this musical style and subculture. At

[20] Both Glezos and Eletttro have contributed to the present work as interviewees.

the end of the 1970s, Guglielmi was one of the first Italian music journalists to regularly write about punk and new wave from the columns of monthly music magazine *Il Mucchio Selvaggio.*[21] In his introduction to the above-mentioned chapter, Guglielmi encapsulates the conventional assessment and periodisation of the Italian punk scene by the national music press.

> *We must be honest and state the following clearly: no book about the roots of punk […] would ever dedicate a chapter to our national scene. It would be different if the account was stretching out to the mid-eighties, thus considering the achievements of bands who have been appreciated (sometimes even mythologised) internationally such as Raw Power, Negazione or Indigesti. In the 1970s though […] almost everything was just a novelty, an unconscious (?) game of aesthetic or playful misunderstandings, an extravagant interpretation of foreign models and a few, almost accidental, good tunes.* (Guglielmi 2007, p. 257)

Guglielmi's quote confirms the widespread opinion that, before the emergence of the Anarcho and hardcore DIY networks, early Italian punk was merely a novelty or a misguided appropriation of a foreign music trend. As we will see in chapter five, this notion is rooted in the reception of punk music by the Italian music press in the late seventies: even when some recognition was conceded to British or North American acts, the assessment of the local appropriation of this musical style was almost invariably negative. Even a writer like Guglielmi, who belonged to a new generation of music journalists which emerged at the tail end of the 1970s and who is known for having championed punk and new wave since his first days as a critic, reiterates this dismissive judgement of early Italian punk as recently as in 2007.

Gilardino has dedicated one chapter to Italian punk from its early stages to the present day. The late-seventies beginnings of punk are described in the first part of the chapter which is titled *Punk alla Carbonara* (Gilardino, 2019, pp. 312-343), just like the book by Glezos and Eletttro.

[21] Italian rock music magazine published between October 1977 and June 2018. *Il Mucchio Selvaggio* was the Italian title of Sam Peckinpah's film *The Wild Bunch* (1969)

Gilardino collocates early punk within the history of national punk and independent music, thus recognising its pioneering role in the definition of the ideology and in the establishment of the practices of Italian indie rock from the 1980s to the present day. With the chapter's internal structure Gilardino also confirms the traditional journalistic periodisation which sees Italian punk as divided into two main periods: the nihilistic beginnings (1977-1980) followed by the rise of Anarcho-punk and hardcore from 1981/1982 onwards. Gilardino also acknowledges the rise of the post-punk movement throughout the 1980s. The author confirms the topography of early Italian punk rock too, with subsections dedicated to Bologna, Pordenone[22] and Milan.

It has been stated above that the new interest for early Italian punk resulted in the publication of several anthologies, lost recordings and reprints of albums and singles. Very often these reissues were accompanied by extensive liner notes which reported about significant events, reconstructed band line-ups and mapped out local scenes.

A recent example of this type of mixed-media archival sources is the 2020 release of a double album with a recording of the live concerts from the *Rock & Metropoli* festival. Held in Milan in 1980, the festival was one of the first showcases for the Italian punk scene: journalists Luca Frazzi and Stefano Gilardino have obtained the tapes from a private archive and issued them as a limited-edition CD, accompanied by a fanzine-styled booklet in which the history of the festival is detailed. The fact that in the past 40 years, no one has manifested any interest in releasing this material can be considered as another proof of the scarce consideration for the punk scene by the record industry as well as by Italian music historians.

A different perspective on Italian punk can be found within a text which has a much wider focus. Jessica Dainese's book *Le Ragazze del Rock* (2011) reconstructs the histories of female musicians in the Italian popular music industries from the post-Second World War period to the present day. In the introduction of a chapter called 'Punk Attitude', Dainese

[22] The provincial North Eastern town of Pordenone also presented an early punk scene. Most of the Pordenone bands went under the collective name of *The Great Complotto* (The Great Conspiracy). The book *The Great Complotto Pordenone* (Mazzocut, 2005) and the booklet released with the reissue of the compilation of the same name by Oderso Rubini (2012) are providing a reconstruction of the local scene between the late 1970s and the first half of the 1980s.

traces a direct link between late-seventies Feminism and the unprecedented number of female bands, performers and activists who contributed to the early punk scene of the same time period. According to Dainese, Feminism can be seen as the motivating factor for many women to come to the front within the ranks of the punk subculture. Punk was the means which allowed many women to perceive themselves as active subjects in a rock related music culture:

> *Feminism (the motivator) spoke to women telling them they possessed a voice which society needed to finally lend and ear. To its credit, Punk (the means) was allowing women a chance to express themselves through music, regardless of their technical abilities.* (Dainese 2011, p. 17)

Nevertheless, as it emerges from several contributions from first wave Italian female musicians and activists which Dainese has collected, the relationship between the seventies Feminist movement and the female punks was sometimes problematic. In her recently published book *Siamo Nati da Soli: Punk, Rock e Politica in Italia e in Gran Bretagna (1977-1984)* (2019), Alessia Masini confirms that, in spite of the active participation of many women in the early punk scene, no significant alliances were established with the Feminist movement of the time:

> *Due to the many mutual differences, no meeting or joint projects took place between punk and pre-existing Feminist organizations.* (Masini 2019, p. 25)

Always according to Masini, the first connections between punk and the Feminist movement only began with the second-wave of the movement, in the early 1980s.

> *The true intertwining [between Feminism and punk] took place from the early eighties starting from an integration of feminism into the ethics of punk, thanks to the articulation of an anarcho-pacifist punk scene […] (ibid.)*

Masini attributes the reconciliation between punk and Feminism to the growth of the Anarcho-punk scene and therefore to punk's full reconnection with Italy's wider socio-

political conflicts. However, a profound analysis on the relationship between the first wave of Italian punk rock and Feminism has not been produced yet.[23]

In the context of non-academic literature about Italian punk, there has been a number of publications specifically dedicated to the Bolognese scene. These publications can be divided into two main categories:

1) Texts which are framing punk into larger narratives about Bologna as a music/arts city or on the *Movimento del 1977* and its expressive output.
2) Texts specifically dedicated to the punk scene and its bands, records and subcultural heritage.

In the first category, we can certainly include *Non Disperdetevi: 1977-1982 San Francisco, New York, Bologna. Le Città Libere del Mondo* (Rubini and Tinti, 2003), an account of the countercultural and musical life of the city of Bologna between 1977 and 1982. The authors, former Harpo's Bazaar/Italian records manager Oderso Rubini and journalist Andrea Tinti, extensively cover the early Bologna punk and new wave scenes. This is done mainly through interviews and direct contributions by several activists, musicians, historians and artists. Rubini also edited *Largo all'avanguardia: 50 Anni di Musica Rock a Bologna* (2011). The book is an overview on the Bologna music scene from the 1950s until the present day. Several chapters are dedicated to the early punk rock scene, with contributions which include accounts by various cultural entrepreneurs. Insight is provided on key events such as the Bologna Rock Festival and the June 1980 Clash concert in Piazza Maggiore. In both cases however, the authors are mainly interested in painting an encompassing portrait in which punk falls within the wider history of rock music in Bologna (*Largo all'Avanguardia*) or among the many facets and trends of Bologna's cultural scene of the late 1970s (*Non Disperdetevi*). Tinti also has compiled a guide to Bolognese rock and pop called *Enciclopedia del Rock Bolognese* (2001) in which most of the early punk and new wave acts of the city are listed and reviewed.

[23] A review of Masini's book can be found in the section of the present chapter dedicated to academic literature about punk.

Several among the sources which are specifically dealing with the local punk scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s are attributable to former Italian Records manager Oderso Rubini and his collaborators. Italian Records, along with its previous incarnation Harpo's Music, was the first punk-inspired independent label in Italy. Along the course of the last 15 years, Rubini has curated various reissues of his label's most important punk releases. Each release is accompanied by printed booklets with band biographies, interviews, scans of flyers/posters, and other material concerning the artists involved.

In particular, *The Italian Records 7" Singles Collection* box-set and its sleeve notes book offer an overview of a large share of the Bolognese and Italian scene with contributions by many of the most significant early punk and new wave acts. Oderso Rubini has also written *No Input, No Output. The Italian Records History* (1980-1985), a history of his label, from its *Movimento del 77* origins until its more entrepreneurial developments of the 1980s. In 2019, Rubini and his long-time collaborator and wife Anna Persiani have curated the *Pensatevi Liberi* exhibition for the Bologna's Museum of Modern Art (*MAMBO*). *Pensatevi Liberi* was the publicity slogan for 1979 *Bologna Rock* festival: the exhibition covered a large time frame, exploring the connections between the Bolognese *avantgarde* rock/pop scene with the cultural and political life of the city between 1971 and 1985. The focus of the exhibition was not only music but also the vast array of expressive outputs which characterised the city during that time period. The printed catalogue for *Pensatevi Liberi* collects images of many of the exhibition's artifacts. Each image and each section of the book is accompanied by Italian and English captions, thus making the *Pensatevi Liberi* exhibition catalogue one of the few bilingual texts about Bolognese punk.

Apart from Rubini's archive based work, another point of view on the early years of Bolognese punk can be found in Riccardo Pedrini's biographical account *Ordigni: Storia del Punk a Bologna* (1998). In the early 1980s, Pedrini would join Nabat, the most popular Italian OI! punk band as guitar player. Nevertheless, Pedrini's account is largely focused on his first approach to punk in the late 1970s. Born in 1964, Pedrini was still a suburban Bologna teenager when the local scene was taking its first steps: therefore, his perspective varies from the usual narratives about Bolognese punk, which are mostly coming from the local art world, the University environment and the 1977 Movement. His account provides for a more balanced reconstruction of the scene and its social composition. My research

work has benefited from these publications as they have allowed me to reconstruct the development and the main events of the early Bolognese scene. As I stated in the introduction, establishing a timeline of events was an essential step before I could start analysing the beginnings of punk in Bologna. By cross-checking all these sources and by integrating the printed accounts with oral histories and other archival material I was able to define the boundaries and evaluate the scope of my research.

4) International Non-Academic Sources about Punk

Since its appearance as a subcultural style and a music genre, punk has inspired a conspicuous amount of journalistic, memorial and even fictional literature. Different narrative styles have been applied to the story of punk, or to *stories of punks*. In this present section, I will present some of these different literary approaches outside the field of academic literature.

One of the most celebrated non-academic studies about punk is certainly John Savage's *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (1991): the book is an accurate reconstruction of the early days of British punk which mainly focuses on the rise and demise of the Sex Pistols. Savage attempts to trace a cultural history of punk, finding its roots in a rebellious strain within capitalistic societies which has produced several 'secret' movements. These movements constitute a 'secret history' which seems to sow the seeds for and inspire subsequent cyclical rebellious exploits. This approach has been predated by Greil Marcus (1989). Even more than Savage, Marcus sees punk as another chapter of a long history of dissent in Western societies which, according to the author, can be traced back to heretical congregations such as the Brethren of the Free Spirit.

These studies offer well documented insight into 'rebellious' forms of expression which predated and inspired certain articulations of punk rock: for instance, it is undeniable that punk ideologues Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood were aware of *avant-garde* art and politics movements such as Dada, Surrealism and Lettrism. Nevertheless, these punk histories have been criticised for not considering how much capitalism has absorbed - and in some ways adopted - punk and how the mass-media system has contributed to its fortunes by projecting and even shaping this subculture's public image: market intervention and mass media representation seem to disrupt the notion of 'secret histories'

on which these narratives are building. Furthermore, these texts are reiterating the idea of subcultures as ritualistic forms of resistance against consumerist society: this is one of the most disputed concepts in the analysis of youth culture carried out by the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies. In a non-academic context, the approach of an historian like Greil Marcus has been thoroughly criticised by Stewart Home (1996): by choosing to focus on the experiences and the output of lesser known bands which were operating outside the circle of the Malcom McLaren/Vivienne Westwood inspired version of punk, Home demonstrates how diverse and polycentric approaches to this subculture and musical style can counterpoint and demystify conventional narratives about it.

A common way of narrating punk is through the collection of oral histories. This narrative tradition has particular relevance to my work because the story of Italian and Bolognese punk is still largely unwritten and thus one of the principal methods for my reconstruction of events was the collection of Oral Histories. Turrini (2013) argues that the oral history collection is particularly suited for analysing punk as it challenges a desire for telling one's own story in their own terms, which is similar to the urge for representation and self-expression which is often motivating individuals to approach punk. This approach calls into question issues of locality, perception of personal identities and social network interactions. Often these collections are focusing on specific punk communities or cities: Robb and Craske (2006) and Savage (2010) focus on the London scene, Neil and McCain (1996) on New York and Mullen and Spitz (2001) on Los Angeles. In my attempt at reconstructing the Bolognese scene I had to resort to oral histories collection consistently. I will detail my experience in the methodology chapter of the present work, but the examples provided by the texts which I have mentioned here surely represented a starting point for my approach to interviews.

One of the most well-known examples of this type of narrative is *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk*, by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain (1996). The book reconstructs the New York punk scene of the late seventies by collecting and weaving together the memories of musicians and several other people who were associated with that *milieu*. Although it provides for a fast-paced and compelling reading, *Please Kill Me* is affected by the limitations connected to narratives constructed with oral histories, especially when they are not interpreted with a critical approach: the tendency from

certain interviewees to magnify – or downplay - their role or the importance of the events to which they are personally connected, the excessive reliance on the inevitably selective nature of individual memories and the risk of accommodating the various contributions into a narrative which might please the authors or the readability of the book rather than serve historical accuracy.[24] Another collection of oral histories is constituted by Jon Savage's *The England's Dreaming Tapes* (2010). In this volume the author has collected all the interviews which he has carried out in preparation for his *England's Dreaming* book. In the preface to the book the author declares that all interviews have been included in their integral, unedited form. Without the need for sustaining a cohesive narrative or reconstructing a series of events, this book is an important repository of first-person accounts from the early UK punk scene, with specific focus on London.

Personal memoirs, biographies and autobiographies of individuals who have been associated with punk are another narrative style which has produced a conspicuous number of publications throughout the years. Many well-known punk musicians, record producers or managers have been the subject of biographical work or have written their own memoirs or biographies. Since the history of early Italian and Bolognese punk is still partially unheard, I found biographical work dedicated to under-represented voices of punk as a more interesting option for my research objectives than the stories of punk's flagbearers which are often hagiographical and shrouded in mythologisation. In the section of this chapter dedicated to texts about questions of gender, I have mentioned the autobiography of Viv Albertine from the all-female band The Slits as an example of a non-rhetorical memoir which not only tells her own story but also manages to offer insight into the experience of first- wave female punks. Under this perspective, another extremely interesting biographical work is *Dayglo: The Poly Styrene Story* (2019). The book narrates the life story of X-Ray Spex's singer Poly Styrene (real name Mary Joan Elliott Said) who has passed away in 2011. The authors, Celeste Bell[25] and Zoë Howe, reconstruct Poly Styrene's life through the personal memories of friends, journalists, fellow musicians and several individuals who collaborated with her. Born in Bromley, the London area after which the

[24] Further analysis into oral history collection as a scientific method will be provided in the Methodology chapter of the present work.

[25] One of the authors, Celeste Bell, is Poly Styrene's daughter.

first group of Sex Pistols supporters was named, Poly Styrene's heritage was Anglo-Somalian. The book provides us with insight on the experience of females and people of mixed heritage in the early UK punk scene. By mixing the oral histories approach with a biographical purpose, *Dayglo: The Poly Styrene Story* is an example of how rarely heard voices can bring different perspectives to narratives about punk. Poly Styrene also has a direct connection to Italian punk: together with her bandmate Lora Logic, X Ray Spex's female saxophonist, she was the first UK punk to be interviewed by the Italian press, as it will be accounted for in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.[26]

Conclusions

Secondary sources on early Italian and Bolognese punk sit between two important traditions of literature. One of these two traditions is represented by the literary output which sees the Italian Long Seventies and the *Movimento del 1977* as its main subjects. The other tradition is the vast international production of literature about punk, both at journalistic and academic level. Both these literary traditions are useful to the purpose of my research but at the same time, they present some shortcomings when applied to the analysis of Italian and Bolognese punk. These shortcomings have been only partially overcome by the recent emergence of texts on the first steps of punk in Italy (Pescetelli 2013, Masini 2019). This is one reason why I believe that my research is offering an urgent contribution to the academic debate on punk.

As I have demonstrated, Italian books on the artistic and musical production of the Long Seventies sometimes do mention punk. In these texts, punk is often presented as just one of the expressive options available to the *Ala Creativa* of the *Movimento*, rather than a new subcultural scene in its own right. This is mainly attributable to the fact that these texts are often adopting the perspective of the *Movimento*: as a result, punk is put under the ideological lens of the *Movimento* microscope and thus it is never fully understood for its unique subcultural characteristics. This ideological perspective has influenced the general assessment of early punk. With these premises, it is not surprising that early research about

[26] See: Anonymous Author, 'Londra il movimento dell'oltraggio*', Re Nudo*, n. 53, May 1977

punk in Italy has focused on the second phase of the punk movement which – through its activism - was re-establishing a connection with the tradition of Italian political radicalism. The predominantly ideological approach in the analysis of the popular culture expressions of the *Movimento* has also shaped the research preoccupations of early research on punk in Italy. It is another side effect of the heritage of the Long Seventies: the ideological element has prevailed over the subcultural one in Italian cultural criticism. Sources on the cultural production of the *Movimento* can certainly help understanding the cultural climate which was dominant when punk first hit Italy: however, none of these texts are focusing on the elements which set punk apart from Italy's mainstream and radical culture.

In the field of Popular Music Studies, punk has been subject to in-depth research. Even if most studies have been focused on U.K. and North-American punk, study on the appropriation of punk in 'peripheral' contexts have flourished in recent years. This new tradition provides a background for the analysis of rock-related subcultures outside of the Anglo-American world. However, when it comes to Italian punk, most of the research work is still focused on the later developments of this subculture, Anarcho-punk and hardcore. This confirms a common tendency within academic research which 'recognises' punk only after it began expressing itself in terms which belonged to established radical ideologies: to put it succinctly, only after the word 'Anarcho' started to be associated with 'Punk'.

The cultural significance and the political meaning of early nihilistic punk in a heavily ideoligised context such as late-seventies Italy is still largely overlooked and misunderstood. This has led to scarce consideration and consequently to scarce literary output. It is my aim to balance this lack of interest with my work on Bologna. By applying concepts developed in the field of academic research to the early Bolognese punk, I aim at contributing to international studies on this subculture. To achieve this goal, I have combined popular music studies theory, primary and secondary sources on Italian punk, oral histories as well as scientific literature about the Italian Long Seventies. Due to the heterogenous nature of my sources, the research has implied the use of a mixed methodology approach which I will describe in the following chapter.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction: Main Methodological Questions

The initial methodological problems which I have encountered in pursuing my research aims are strictly connected to scarcity of secondary literature about my specific subject and by the heterogeneous nature of the sources at my disposal. My main objective was to contribute to the debate about popular culture and ideology in late-seventies Italy through an analysis of the early punk scene in Bologna. To achieve this purpose, I had to highlight and remark the specificity of the 'punk perspective' in the context of the conflicts of the Italian Long Seventies: therefore, a necessary step was reconstructing a story of Bolognese punk as a subculture in its own right and not as just one of the expressions of the *Ala Creativa* of the *Movimento del 77*, as it has often been dealt with in the existing secondary literature about the Long Seventies. To do so, I had to match and combine multi-media primary and secondary sources trying to identify and follow a punk 'thread' (especially with regard to secondary sources) within them. Moreover, to integrate the scarce literary material at my disposal, I had to collect interviews with members of the scene and witnesses of the main events connected with punk in Bologna. By cross-checking these three different types of sources I was able to map out and establish a partial story of early Bolognese punk. I also wanted to demonstrate the existence of a cause/effect relationship between the fortunes of the local punk scenes and the response to it from the political sphere. Therefore, besides my 'punk sources', I had to collect, read and analyse secondary literature about the socio-political situation in Italy during the Long Seventies with particular focus on Bologna as well as on Milan and Rome, the two other cities which I have chosen as comparative case studies. The varied nature of my sources required the adoption of a combination of research methods which I will detail in the present chapter. This methodology chapter will be structured as follows. In the first part, I will present the methods which I have employed and the reasons which have led me to opt for these specific research approaches. in this section I will also introduce my interviewees. For each one of them I will provide the main reasons for which I have decided to include them in my research. In the second part of the chapter, I will introduce the strengths and weaknesses of the Oral Histories collection method in the light of my research experience: I will draw some of my observations from the ongoing academic debate about this methodology. In

the conclusions, I will elaborate on which methodologies could be employed for possible further research on the subject of early Bolognese and Italian punk.

Methods

The main methods which I have been systematically employing have been the following: qualitative content analysis of primary and secondary sources and narrative enquiry. When applied to my research each method presented strengths and weaknesses which I will now briefly analyse.

- **Content Analysis: Secondary sources**

With regard to the historical research which I had to undertake in order to contextualize my research subject within the climate of the Years of Lead*,* I was able to rely on a wide choice of academic literature. Italy's Long Seventies have been analysed under different perspectives: there is a vast array of historical, sociological and cultural literature about this period of Italy's contemporary history. Nevertheless, although it might be sometimes mentioned among the cultural expressions of the era, none of these studies are focusing specifically on punk. However, due to the proximity of the ideological and the musical milieu of the times, some important political events also coincided with important punk scene landmarks: one example is the September 1977 *Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione*[27], a political gathering which, according to several reports, also hosted the first self-consciously punk rock show in Bologna. Academic literature has widely analysed the *Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione* for its pivotal role in the fortunes of Italian extra-parliamentary activism[28]: on the other hand, reports about the early punk gig which happened during the proceedings can only be found on non-academic, secondary or primary sources. The case of the *Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione* exemplifies how, in order to provide an account of the early Bolognese punk scene in its historical context, it was necessary to continuously move between academic and non-academic sources, once again weaving together the 'big history' of Italy's Long Seventies and the 'small history' of

[27] *The Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione* (National Conference on Repression) and its involvement with the early punk scene will be accounted for in Chapter 6 of the present work.

[28] See: Galfré and Neri Serneri (2018), Gagliardi (2017), Bellassai (2009)

early Bologna punk. Moreover, these texts sometimes presented incoherence and omissions of significant data. I have tried to overcome this problem by cross-checking between sources of different nature. However, it was not always possible to confirm the information in my possession.

Only by combining different sources and research methods mentioned above I have been able to provide a partial history of Bolognese punk and its complex relationship with the local socio-political context.

- **Content Analysis: Primary Sources**

As it has been stated in the previous paragraph, information about early Italian punk is spread out over material of very diverse nature such as records, fanzines, video tapes/YouTube videos, audio cassettes, band demos, interviews, radio broadcast recordings, independent media reports, flyers, personal memoirs and archives, music magazines, newspaper articles, journalistic books, documentaries, and various other sources. Even in the case of secondary sources, information about the first steps of Bolognese punk can also be found 'buried' in a vast array of pieces of news, political reports, radio specials which aimed at generally covering the habits of the local youth in the late seventies. This is due to a general scarcity of information as well as a lack of interest about the punk subculture both by the public and by the local media of the times: which sometimes made it difficult to recognise certain early articulations of the new subculture as specifically 'punk'. For these reasons, a qualitative approach based on content analysis appeared to me as the best method to pursue my research goals.

The physical and digital collection and the storage of mixed media sources, primary as well as secondary, has been an important and time-consuming part of my research work especially in its initial stages. Most of these primary sources are extremely rare and sought after by collectors and music enthusiasts: only a small part of them has been digitalised so far. I also took advantage of personal collections of primary sources: these private archives were made available to me some of my interviewees, by various members of the early Italian punk scene, as well as by collectors. My personal experience in the Italian independent scene has facilitated my research of these primary sources and my access to private collections. Part of the sources were also coming from my own archive: I have been

collecting early Italian punk rock records and multi-media material since the late 1980s. In my teenage years, I was able to attend shows from some of the bands mentioned in this work. I have also taken advantage of social networks such as Facebook and Instagram to advertise my research for original artifacts of the early punk era: response to my enquiries has been positive. Two of my main interviewees and primary have responded to my public enquiry on Facebook. I selected, collected and organised the material into three main digital and hard copy databases for the Bologna, Milan and Rome scenes: I also created another database of other primary sources about Italian punk *tout-court.*

The presentation of punk by Italian media is another key element which can lead to a better understanding of the reception of early punk rock in the country. Specific attention has been dedicated to the treatment of punk in the political press of the time. Both institutional party organs such as *l'Unità*[29] or extra-parliamentary journals such as *Lotta Continua*[30] or *Re Nudo*[31], regularly covered pop culture themes, in an effort to contain all aspects of social life within an ideological framework. The role of independent radio has been briefly analysed too, as the arrival of the punk subculture coincided with the birth of Italian private radio broadcasting.

- **Narrative Enquiry and Collection of Oral Histories**

In the initial stages of my research, I delved into the collection of oral histories under the conviction that interviews may compensate for the shortage of literary sources at my disposal. I was also hoping that questioning witnesses of the main events could clarify the many inconsistencies that were emerging from my primary and secondary sources.

However, by cross-checking sources, I soon realised that the oral histories I was collecting often presented incoherence and missing details too: I was faced with the same consistency issues which were affecting my primary and secondary material. Moreover, accounts about the same events varied significantly among interviewees, thus making the reconstruction

[29] Official newspaper of the Italian Communist Party

[30] Official newspaper of the extra-parliamentary group of the same name.

[31] *Re Nudo (Naked King)* was one of the most popular politics and culture magazines of the Italian radical Marxist movement.

of key events a rather problematic process. As a result, the issue of integrating the recollections of members of the early Bolognese punk scene among themselves as well as with the data emerging from other primary or secondary sources became one of the most challenging aspects of my research: I found out that the only method for reconstructing the main events of the early scene, was to carefully cross-check and then weave together my sources to build a narrative which, albeit partial and still arbitrary, could at least provide a sense of the main events which led to the growth of the early punk scene.

My tendency to rely on oral accounts lays in the origins of my interest for my research subject. As I have explained in the introduction to the present work, one of the reasons which has led me to undertake research on Italian punk was the frequency with which I have been hearing stories from veterans of the early scene about their problematic relationship with the 1977 political movement. These oral accounts have been regularly reoccurring during my working years in the Italian independent music scene. I have also noticed a striking discrepancy between the high number of stories and oral accounts and the scarcity of literature on the subject. My personal experience, followed by my largely unsuccessful quest for literary sources, made me realise that the history of early Italian punk has been – for the most part – orally transmitted. This early realisation motivated me towards conducting interviews with some of the protagonists of the early scene. However, I did not want to limit the scope of my interviews to people who had been members of the punk subculture. I have tried to select my interviewees with the purpose of having different points of views on the events: for this reason, I also spoke to figures who did not directly belong to the scene but were involved in some its main events and developments. My aim was to express the complexity of the interactions between the punk scene and the local community.

I will now introduce my main interviewees by presenting the motivations behind my intention of collecting their experiences.

Laura Carroli

One on the main contributors to my research, both in terms of primary sources and oral histories, has been Laura Carroli. Laura was the drummer for Anarcho-punk band RAF Punk. Based in Bologna, RAF Punk were the first band to embrace that brand of Anarcho-punk

which began the politicisation of the punk scene and, consequently, started the process which would later allow this subculture to take root in the *terroir* of Italy's political radicalism. Inspired by direct contacts with UK outfit Crass and working closely with her friend and RAF Punk singer Helena Velena, Laura also founded Attack Punk, the first Anarcho-punk label in Italy. However, Laura's experience with punk began with the first wave of Bolognese punk, as a fan and as a concert organiser. Before discovering punk, Laura was involved in political activism in the Bolognese extra-parliamentary area: as a teenager she was attending Feminist, Communist and Anarchist meetings and participated in demonstrations and political initiatives. Having experienced the tail end of the 1977 Movement, the early steps of punk in Bologna and, finally, having contributed to the further evolution of the scene in the early eighties, Laura became one of the main reference points for my research. She also opened her personal archives to me, thus providing most of the primary sources for my research. Laura's contribution also allowed me to explore an aspect which is often overlooked even in the few sources about punk: the important role played by women in the early punk scene. It was an unprecedented occurrence for a rock-related subculture in Italy to feature so many women as well as LGBTQ+ persons in leading and flag-bearing positions: thanks to Laura Carroli's contribution I was able to investigate the reasons which made early punk appealing to some Italian women.

Mauro Felicori

During the late seventies, Italy underwent a number of significant changes in its public cultural policies. Bologna and its punk scene were at the forefront of these transformations. For this reason, I have chosen to interview Mauro Felicori, one of the cultural operators for the city's administration. Felicori was part of a team appointed by the town government: their task was to organise activities for the local youth. Working with the future Mayor of Bologna Walter Vitali, Felicori organised a free festival in 1980. The festival showcased most of the punk and new wave bands from the local scene. Leading UK punk band The Clash were booked as headliner, causing mixed reactions from the local punk community, especially from the new-born Anarcho-punk community. Talking to an institutional figure like Mauro Felicori has provided insight on the ways in which institutional politics have also contributed to the developments of the local scene in Bologna.

Oderso Rubini

Under the influence of the new generation of British record labels which were born in the wake of the punk movement, the role of independent record companies went through a radical rethinking in late-seventies Italy. Bologna's Italian Records was explicitly inspired by the activities of labels such as Rough Trade and Cherry Red. However, its roots laid in the *Ala Creativa* of the 1977 Movement. I decided to interview Italian Records manager Oderso Rubini to have insight on the transition of his label from a multi-media laboratory for the political movement to an independent punk label. Rubini was among the organisers of the 1979 Bologna Rock Festival, one of the key events for the local scene during the time frame covered by this research work. He is also the author of several publications about the Bolognese music scene as well as the curator of 'Pensatevi Liberi', the first important exhibition about arts and music in late seventies Bologna.[32] Oderso Rubini's archival resources have been essential for my collection of primary and secondary material about punk in Bologna.

Giorgio Lavagna

Before forming Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano (later Gaznevada), one of the first Bolognese punk bands, Giorgio Lavagna was a DJ for local *Movimento* station Radio Alice and a graphic designer in the Traumfabrik collective. Traumfabrik was a squat in central Bologna which had been occupied during a protest March in late 1976. To this day the graphic designs and the aesthetic of Traumfabrik are closely associated with that historical period and with the ironic and futuristic forms of protest which characterised the 1977 Movement in Bologna. Like Rubini, Lavagna is a key figure to understand how punk found important early supporters in the *avant-garde* fringes of the *Ala Creativa.*

Stefano 'Steno' Cimato

An early member of RAF Punk and later founder of Nabat, the most prominent OI! Skinhead band in Italy, Stefano 'Steno' Cimato, is an important witness of the early steps of

[32] The exhibition was held at the Museum of Modern Art (MAMBO) in Bologna between May 17 and September 29, 2019

Bolognese punk. Steno was a resident of the San Donato quarter, an area of Bologna which at the time was considered problematic due to episodes of juvenile delinquency and a high incidence of heroin use among the young. His attention to class issues within the scene was the main reason which led me to interview him.

Other Interviewees

The interviews with Carroli, Felicori, Rubini, Steno and Lavagna constituted the backbone of my reconstruction of the Bolognese scene. I also had the chance to interview Eletttro – a female member of the younger group of punks which initially gathered around Carroli and Velena. Eletttro is also the author and the editor of one of the first Italian punk fanzines 'Coca-Scola', which she started publishing in 1978. Eletttro's contribution widened my perspective on the gender diversity of the scene and provided further insight on the sometimes-problematic relationship between early punk and the Feminist movement. Eletttro has also co-authored and co-edited *Punk alla Carbonara* (Eletttro and Glezos, 1998), one of the few printed collections of primary artifacts from the early Italian punk scene. Glezos, her co-author, belonged to the very early Milanese punk scene: he was a member of several Milanese punk bands and to this day he plays in the Gags, one of the few early Milan punk acts which is occasionally active. Glezos was also an attendee of the free music schools in the Santa Marta Centre, one of the main cultural hubs of the Milanese *Movimento* during the late seventies. His experiences between political militancy and early punk have constituted the core of my interview with him. Both Eletttro and Glezos decided to release their interviews and to be referenced in this text by their punk names.

Interview Procedures

The interviews have all been conducted in the form of *viva voce* discussions and have been audio-recorded. Before each meeting, all interviewees were sent an information sheet about my research subject. The document also introduced the privacy and generic sensitive issues connected to interviews for academic publications. With the information sheet, I also provided a list of the main questions I was going to ask them. The date and place of the interview has been agreed with each contributor: a trusted third party has been informed of the date, time and location of the interviews. At the end of each interview, I asked the contributors to sign a consent for the use of data form. Interviewees were also

presented with the option of signing a form for the anonymous use of data, or to refuse permission to use their contribution entirely. As a follow up, I sent the audio file of our conversations to each interviewee for their approval.[33] Finally, since I have decided not to include the full transcripts of the interviews in the final text, I have been regularly sending drafts of the chapters which contained significant quotes and excerpts to the interested contributors.

Oral Histories Collection and Bolognese Punk: A Methodological Debate

At the beginning of my research journey, I considered the consistency issues which I have presented in the previous sections of this chapter as shortcomings which undermined the applicability of the oral history collection method to my research subject. However, as I delved into methodology readings, I understood that these questions have been at the helm of the epistemological debate about the Oral History method for decades now. As suggested by Portelli (1997), oral history is opening opportunities for a more dynamic approach to research which can take account of - without necessarily embracing them unquestioningly - multiple perspectives and different points of view. Portelli also makes interesting reflections on the figure of the interviewer with particular regards to oral history research projects which are focusing on communities or social groups: Portelli argues that a former or current member of a community can sometimes be seen as an excessively familiar interlocutor by interviewees who belong to the same group. On the other hand, an interviewer which is perceived as a trusted outsider can perhaps generate a more open discussion (Portelli 2013, pp. 278-279). As a member of the independent music scene, I happened to know most of the interviewees but I certainly was not a member of the early Bolognese punk scene. I was informed about the events but not directly involved with them: indeed, many of my interlocutors told me that they felt comfortable talking to me because, in their opinion, I was able to 'understand' – due to my shared passion for punk and my active participation in the Italian underground music scene – but at the same time I was not directly involved in the dynamics of the close-knit early punk community.

[33] The interview procedures have been conducted in accordance with the directions on human subject data collection provided by The University of Glasgow's College of Arts. Before starting my on-field interviews, I had regularly obtained the necessary permission from the University of Glasgow Research Ethics Committee. For reference: https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/arts/research/ethics/

Historian Luisa Passerini has warned about the risks connected to relying excessively on Oral History for research purposes. According to Passerini there is a looming danger of drifting towards 'the writing of history into a form of populism – that is to replace certain of the central tenets of scholarship with facile democratisation, and an open mind to demagogy' (1979, p. 84). However, Passerini also argued that the relevance and usefulness of oral history lay exactly in its difference, rather than its consistency or accuracy in the reporting of facts and events. Through oral histories we can enter other areas of research: for instance, we can investigate the representations of cultures, or subcultures, not just through 'literal narrations but also the dimensions of memory, ideology and subconscious desires' (1979, p. 104). Indeed, always according to Portelli, interviews reveal 'not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did' (1981, pp. 99-100). From his point of view, the inconsistencies and contradictions of oral histories should not be seen as shortcomings but as ways of grasping the way in which personal memories are constructed (and re-constructed every time) at the intersection between personal lives with society, subcultures and ideologies. By studying the scientific debate about oral histories, I understood that the value of this method resides in the possibility of opening the historical narrative to different voices: this applied to my subject as the voices of the first Bolognese punks has been very rarely heard in academic research. Moreover, some individuals from social groups which had been under represented in previous rock related subcultures as well as within the ranks of the *Movimento* found an expressive outlet in first wave punk. My interview work does not cover all the multiplicities of these identities, but it might inspire future research about Italian and Bolognese punk and the ethnographic composition of the scene, as I will suggest in the final paragraph of the present chapter. For the purposes of my work, I mainly used my interviews to supplement and complete data emerging from my analysis of primary and secondary sources. By weaving together oral histories and the primary sources in my possession I was able to provide my work with the 'voice' of punk: it was precisely the voice which I felt was missing from most of the secondary literature about late seventies Bologna and Italy.

Conclusions

In the light of the scarcity of scientific literature on my research subject, reconstructing the main events, debates and opinions which concerned Bolognese punk mostly through primary sources and oral histories was the only way to obtain a clearer view of the local scene and its context. Nevertheless, these texts sometimes presented incoherence and omissions of significant data. I have tried to overcome this problem by cross-checking data and facts between sources of different nature. Despite my efforts, it was not always possible to confirm the data in my possession: this led to the omission of some events which were the object of too many contrasting reports. In the early stages of my research, I considered the scarcity of written sources as a potential shortcoming for the validity of my research. However, I soon found that the few written reports on Italian punk often tend to overlook important aspects such as the gender variety of the scene and the contribution of women and LGBTQ+ persons. Under this perspective, resorting to narrative enquiry allowed me not only to reconstruct facts and events but also to include some neglected voices for a more inclusive account of events.

However, collecting oral histories from local punks and other witnesses raised several broader questions about the social composition of the early Bolognese scene. I started wondering not only about the subcultural identity of the early Bologna punks and their relationship with the socio-political climate of the Long Seventies, but also about their class background and gender identity. In Italy as well as in Bologna, early punk only appealed to a small number of individualities: therefore, mapping out the social, cultural and political background of these subjectivities might have provided further insight about the appeal of this subculture in the local context. I tried to understand why these few young individuals responded to a genre that was largely ignored, when not actively opposed, by most of their fellow Italians. I asked myself if their economic and political identity influenced their embracing of punk or not. I enquired about their previous musical background, both as listeners and, when applicable, music players. Bologna was also one of the destinations for Italian internal emigration from the south to the north of the country: this emigration overlapped with the presence of a large number of university students coming from all over Italy. I started asking myself questions about possible correlations between the presence of these social groups and the development of Bologna's music scene. Furthermore, the

first punk scene presented a variety in gender representation which was unprecedented, if compared to other rock related subcultures: I have been trying to understand the reasons why the early punk scene attracted such a diverse mix of gender identities. However, all these questions could not be answered by the methods which I have employed and by the aims I had set for this research work. Systematic ethnographic research about Bolognese punks could have provided a clearer overview on the social fabric of the early scene. Since my research focus was on punk and politics in late seventies Bologna, my ethnographic mapping was inevitably partial and incomplete and could not be included in the present work. Nevertheless, a methodical and encompassing research on the ethnographic composition of Italian and Bolognese punks could offer stimulating perspectives for future research.

Chapter IV

Anni di Piombo: The Socio-Political and Cultural Context of the Italian Long Seventies

Introduction: Contextualising Italian Punk

The leading argument of this PhD dissertation is that the Italian and Bolognese response to early punk, both as a musical genre and as a subculture, must be researched and explained within the highly distinct socio-political context of late-seventies Italy. From this perspective, special regard will be given to the relationship between punk and the Italian leftist area, both at institutional and extra-parliamentary level. Any reaction to popular music related subcultures cannot be understood without looking at social conflict inherent in capitalist societies. This is particularly evident in Italy's case, where the first steps of punk rock were taken within a social *milieu* which was marked by pervasive ideological and cultural polarisation. As it will be argued, punk reached Italy when everyday political violence in the country was quickly escalating towards its late seventies/early eighties peak. In this context, a music subculture such as punk rock, with its spectacular display of controversial political iconography and with its confrontational articulations, which in some cases dangerously overlapped with socio-political themes which were extremely sensitive within Italian society, was often met with suspicion, derision and sometimes even open hostility. This rejection did not only come from mainstream Italian public opinion and mass media but, most significantly, also from the vast area of Marxist radicalism which had been dominating national cultural debate since the post-war period,. At many levels of Italian society, there was a widespread consensus around the idea that the left had been excercising a form of intellectual hegemony over the country. The approval - or dismissal - of contemporary popular culture trends by the leftist *milieu* could determine the fortune of local and international trends, not only with the Marxist and left-leaning public but at wider national level too. It will be argued that the radicalised climate of the Years of Lead has influenced the everyday life and the popular music preferences of Italian youth: this influence will play a decisive role in the assessment of punk in Italy.

This chapter will reconstruct how, by the second half of the seventies, the Italian left had become the leading voice in national cultural debate. It will also present and analyse the political situation of the country at the moment of punk rock's first arrival in Italy. I claim that it was exactly the juxtaposition of Italy's tense situation, the critical assessment of popular music by the Marxist left and some problematic articulations of the punk

subculture that have determined the characteristics of early italian punk – as well as its fortunes – between 1977 and 1980.

Chapter Structure

The first part of this chapter will provide a brief but necessary introduction to the historical context of the Italian seventies as a time of crisis and change for the country: debated concepts such as *Anni di Piombo* (the Years of Lead*)* and *Riflusso* (withdrawal*)* will be introduced. In the subsequent section, the focus will shift on the cultural politics of the Italian left, with specific regard to music and popular culture. As it has been stated above, the Marxist Left was largely dominating the cultural debate in the country thus mediating the public's perception of cutting-edge popular culture and music. I will investigate how the idea of the perceived cultural hegemony of the left was born in the second post-war period and how it was experienced within Italy's public life.

In the second part of the chapter I will introduce how the post 1968 period led to a shift in leadership in terms of cultural criticism within the Italian leftist front. The extra-parliamentary left and the radical movements which had emerged from the 1968/1969 protests became the most advanced and cutting-ege voice in the Italian intellectual debate throughout the 1970s. The cultural agencies of the PCI were overtaken by new intellectual forces which were much more appealing to the new generation of Italian militants. The new leftist intellectuals wrote and spoke extensively about contemporary and consumerist culture: as a result, music became one of the territories of socio-political conflict. Genres such as rock and jazz were substantially invested with ideological significance and analysed through political categories. This process of politicisation of certain genres of popular music was carried out through various agents such as independent radios (*radio libere*), political magazines, the *Circoli del Proletariato Giovanile (Proletarian Youth Clubs)*[34] and youth organisations.

[34] Public halls/rooms/houses in which the Left leaning young people would gather under the supervision of political activists. *The Circoli del Proletariato Giovanile* would host meetings, debates, organisational gatherings and political theory courses. *The Centri* were often used for recreational events too, hosting film screenings, theatre plays and concerts.

In the conclusions, I will summarise how all the above-mentioned cultural and socio-political processes have influenced the *milieu* in which Bolognese punk took its first steps, with specific regard to the *Movimento del 77* and its ideological and aesthetic values.

- ***'Years of Lead':*** **Main Actors and Events**

In the 1970s, Italy was characterised by constant social unrest, institutional crisis and political turmoil. Politics and ideology were at the centre of an extended period of struggle which had exploded at the end of the 1960s with the students and workers protest. Following the economic boom of the late fifties and early sixties – the so-called *Miracolo Economico Italiano* or *Italy's Economic Miracle* -, the crisis of the 1970s prolonged this long season of protests and exacerbated its manifestations into the following decade. As it has just been stated, this historical phase had its roots in the 1968 protest, thus marking the end of a period of widespread optimism brought by the above mentioned Italian economic boom in the early sixties (Crainz, 2003). This climate of institutional crisis and political polarisation grew steadily throughout the 1970s and extended its influence until the beginning of the eighties: for this reason, some historians have employed the expression the 'Long Seventies' to describe this phase of Italian contemporary history (Baldissara, 2001).

From its early stages, the Italian 1968 movement was marked by a strong anti-capitalistic approach, influenced by the long-standing tradition of Italian Marxism and by the cultural influence of the Italian Communist Party on a large share of the country's public opinion. In terms of parliamentary representation and membership support, the *PCI* was the largest Communist party in the Western U.S.-influenced world. The PCI had played a fundamental role in the anti-Fascist resistance during the Second World War and in the birth of the Italian Republic in 1947. Post-war Italian political life was marked by the confrontation between the Catholic Church-backed Democratic Christian Party (*Democrazia Cristiana* – from now on DC in the present text) – with its national and NATO allies – and the *PCI,* torn between its ties with the Third Socialist International and the so-called 'Italian way to Socialism' (Mammarella, 1976). Even if *PCI* was ruling over large areas of the country such as the Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany and Umbria regions, it never participated in a national government of the *Repubblica Italiana*. In fact, the *DC* had always managed to secure control of national rule, often through an intricate system of alliances aimed at keeping the

Communists out of a governmental coalition. Despite this opposition, the *PCI* was one of the most authoritative voices in Italy's public life: its political and cultural guidelines influenced the life of millions of Italians. In 1976, *PCI* scored its best electoral result ever, reaching 34,76% of the popular vote (Andreuccio, 2014). This persuaded Democratic Christian Party leader and former Prime Minister Aldo Moro to accept a proposal – presented by *PCI* secretary Enrico Berlinguer - to devise a common plan aimed at including *PCI* in a future national government. Nevertheless, the proposal, called *Compromesso Storico* (Historical Compromise), was never put into practice: in 1978, President Moro was kidnapped and executed by a *Brigate Rosse* (Red Brigades) commando. This event re-shaped the political perspective and *PCI* remained in opposition until its dissolution in 1991 (Galli, 2004).

I Movimenti

Mass political parties, the crisis of Italian institutional political system and terrorism were not the only actors in this phase of Italian history. A new wave of organised protest was also on the rise in the form of extra-parliamentary political movements (*Movimenti)*.

In fact, the 1968 period and its long aftermath had signaled a mass crisis in political representation. A large share of Italian society did not feel that their ideas, wishes and hopes were represented by the institutions or political parties. Furthermore, especially within the radical Marxist Left, there was a widespread conviction that the Italian Republic had betrayed the ideals of the anti-fascist resistance: according to many militants, *PCI* and the other leftist parties – which *de facto* had been monopolising the political heritage of the *partigiani*[35] – had abandoned any sincere perspective for social change and were only interested in balancing power management through parliamentary action. Another critical element that the post-1968 climate had brought to the fore was the so-called *Rifiuto della delega* (refusal of mediated political representation): a widespread mistrust in the capability of institutional politics, including trade unions and left-wing parties, to represent and fulfill the needs of the population, especially those of the working classes. All this led to the formation of many extra-parliamentary groups which wanted to compensate for these shortcomings by engaging with direct political action. These forms of direct

[35] The *Partigiani* (Partisans*)* were the members of the anti-fascist resistance during the Second World War.

engagement ranged from establishing revolutionary or radical counter information networks, to actively provide substitutes for public social services which were perceived as insufficient or administered on classist premises. New, independent and more radical workers and student unions emerged: protest and occupations of factories, public administration offices and universities intensified. Especially, but not exclusively, in the suburban areas of the largest southern Italian cities, where the presence of the state was particularly insufficient, extra-parliamentary Marxist groups also provided alternative forms of welfare state: from housing to healthcare, from sports to entertainment, these groups aimed at reclaiming what they considered inalienable rights of the working classes from the hands of the capitalistic market and from the inefficiencies of the Italian welfare system. One example was the *Movimento per la Casa* (Housing Movement) which assisted, managed and coordinated the occupation and squatting of council houses in cities of Rome, Milan or Naples by proletarian families (Pescetelli, 2013).

These extra-parliamentary groups became notable also for the consensus which they managed to generate: by the mid-seventies hard-line Communist groups like *Lotta Continua* (Continued Struggle), *Potere Operaio* (Workers' Power), *Avanguardia Operaia* (Workers Vanguard) counted several thousand activists among their ranks. At the height of its popularity, *Lotta Continua* alone was boasting more than five hundred-thousand members (Balestrini, Moroni, 2011). Even if most of the largest extra-parliamentary formations belonged to the Marxist left, all political areas expressed forms of radical activism, including the post-Fascist right. In fact, the rapid diffusion of Marxist activism and its growing popularity caused a virulent reaction from the Italian neo-Fascists. The official political heir of the fascist regime, the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* party (from now on *MSI* in the present text), despite capitalising on the nostalgic sentiments for the Mussolini era harboured by some Italians, seemed mostly preoccupied with gaining respectability in the post-war republican assessment of the country. However, younger fascist groups were actively and aggressively counter-acting against what they saw as a dangerous wave of Communism which seemed on the verge of taking over the country. Neo-Fascists quickly became a visible presence in universities, high schools and on the streets, promoting their agenda and regularly clashing with left-wing militants. The actions of new groups like *Ordine Nuovo* (New Order) and *Lotta di Popolo* (People's Struggle), both formed in 1969, gave new impulse to the *MSI* youth organisations too (Tassinari, 2008). By the end of the

1960s, insurrectional Fascism was on the streets again, as it had been in the early 1920s. In this climate, many militants from both ends of the political spectrum, were convinced that armed struggle was the only way to achieve effective social change. From the beginning of the seventies a long list of terrorist groups, including the *BR*, began their activities[36]. This mass wave of political engagement and terrorism alarmed the Italian establishment and its Western allies. The Italian state would undertake various strategies of repression which included the approval of special laws officially designed to face terrorism and to control this multi-faceted wave of ideological radicalism.

Anni di Piombo

From the beginning of the 1980s, in order to describe the heavy and violent climate which marked this dramatic phase of Italian contemporary history, the Italian press started employing the expression *Years of Lead* (*Anni di Piombo*).

In fact, the entire period between 1969 and 1984 was marked by a plethora of assassinations, bombings, kidnappings, attempted *coup d'états* and various forms of political violence. This determined a climate of continued tension all over the nation. Even though the paternity of some of these attacks is still debated, it has been now established by criminal justice that some of the most ferocious bombings of the Years of Lead, including the Bologna train station bombing of 1980, were part of a plan called *Strategia della Tensione,*[37] a plot involving secret services, organised crime, sections of Italian freemasonry and right-wing terrorism: the strategy was aimed at steering Italian public opinion away from support for ideas of radical change and to orientate it towards a policy of law and order.

Nevertheless, the Long Seventies cannot be exclusively described as a time of political violence and terrorism: in fact, the *Anni di Piombo* definition has been recently

[36] Active Marxist terrorist groups included *Gruppi D'azione Partigiana* (GAP) *Nuclei Armati Proletari* (NAP), *Prima Linea* (PL), *Comitati Comunisti Rivoluzionari* (Co.Co.Ri), *Proletari Armati per il Comunismo* (PAC). Several Neo-Fascist terrorist group such as *Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari* (NAR), *Ordine Nuovo*, *Ordine Nero*, *Terza Posizione* and *Avanguardia Nazionale* were active too during the 1970s and 1980s.

[37] Strategy of Tension: for an historical account and analysis of the strategia della tensione see Galli, 2007; Ginsborg, 1990; Lanaro, 1992.

problematicised for its reductive and condemning characterisation. In fact, those years were also a time of change and modernisation for Italy. Even in its later stages, which have been historicised as the *Riflusso* phase, this period of Italian history was able to express vital forms of social progress and civic engagement. An example of this is the rise of the Feminist movement, between the second half of the seventies and the early eighties, at a time when other expressions of the post-1968 radical movements had lost their *momentum*.

Il Riflusso (1978-1983)

Punk reached Italy at the end of the seventies when, according to the traditional narratives about the Long Seventies, the country's decade-long history of mass social contention was entering its final stages. The term *Riflusso* came to describe the years between 1978 and 1983, to signify that the wave of protest was gradually beginning to wane. In fact, the intensification of police and state repression which had met the new and overwhelming wave of protests of 1977 (*Movimento del 1977*), the disbandment of the influential *Lotta Continua* group in 1975, the difficulties in finding a common line towards armed struggle had brought the movement to a standstill. Initiatives which intended to bring new solidarity and coordination to the radical front, such as the 1976 *Parco Lambro Festival* in Milan and the *Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione* in Bologna (September 1977), only showed that the cracks and the divisions within the *Movimento* had reached boiling point. A pervasive sensation of defeat and tiredness started to propagate within the ranks of the multi-faceted Italian anti-establishment front, which had been fighting since 1968 (Palestrina and Moroni, 2011). Furthermore, in 1975, the Italian parliament approved a set of special anti-terrorism laws – *Legge Reale* – which allowed the police and the judicial system to bypass several constitutional rights of Italian citizens in the name of the defense of the republican institutions. These laws became effective instruments to put further pressure on the entire radical movement, according to a theory which saw the extra-parliamentary left – especially the *Autonomia Operaia* group – as breeding and recruiting grounds for terrorists. The *PCI,* whose leadership had taken a firm stand against terrorism, backed the above-mentioned laws in the parliamentary debate which led to their approval. A referendum for the abolition of *Legge Reale* was held in 1978: as a confirmation of the fact that the tide of public opinion was changing direction, Italians voted overwhelmingly against the abolition

of the law. This result provided the government with sufficient *momentum* to pass another law, 1980's *Legge Cossiga*, which gave even more *carte blanche* to Italian law enforcement bodies in their action against political sedition (Galli, 2004).

As the social climate became more and more violent and bleak, many former radicals abandoned the public sphere of political activity: some retreated into private life and work, others drifted towards less politically confrontational alternative lifestyles (mysticism, communes) and others became victims of the heroin epidemic of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Nevertheless, the crisis in mass engagement of the late 1970s, did not determine a decrease of political violence in Italy, on the contrary. Faced with the virulence of state repression and having abandoned any hope of a revolution through mass mobilisation, some militants joined the already existing terrorist groups or formed brand new ones: as a result, the number of violent deaths associated with political extremism increased dramatically during the *Riflusso* years of the Long Seventies.

Episodes like the abduction and assassination of former prime minister Aldo Moro in 1978 and the kidnapping of U.S Army General and commander in chief of Southern European NATO forces James Lee Dozier in 1981, also demonstrated that the capability of Italian terrorism to conduct complex operations and to strike at the highest levels of power was still growing.

Furthermore, the strategy of tension reached its tragic climax with the bombing of the Bologna train station in 1980, which claimed the life of 85 people.

Violence was not only restricted to terrorism though: many militants and state officers lost their lives in riots and gunfights which originated from marches, occupations and protests. Furthermore, politically motivated attacks and clashes in schools, universities, workplaces, party halls and public houses became everyday occurrences. In 1979 alone, 659 episodes of political violence were registered by the police. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Ministero degli Interni*), in 1969 there were only two active terrorist organisations on the Italian territory: ten years later that number had grown to two-hundred and sixty-nine.[38]

Another worrying phenomenon was the rapid blurring of the lines between common criminal activities and political violence. For example, the practice of financing themselves

[38] Source: Schaerf, C. et al (1992)

with armed robberies was widespread among terrorist groups: to accomplish these actions sometimes brief alliances with the crime underworld were established – especially by right-wing groups – thus creating further problems to law-enforcement investigations. This type of incidents overlapped with the activities of non-political gangsters and historical local crime organisations like the *Mafia, Camorra, Sacra Corona Unita and 'Ndrangheta* which were rapidly expanding their activities over the entire national territory.

All these elements, combined with the hard contraction of Italian and Western economy, made for a bleak and grim climate. The enthusiasm and the sense of impending victory which had sustained the Italian leftist front for more than a decade was now giving way to a seemingly endless chain of gruesomely violent episodes. The last years of the Long Seventies also put a distance between radical thought and the main body of Italian public opinion. In 1980, several thousand *FIAT* administrative workers marched in Turin, asking for a compromise between the unions and the corporations' chairmen: they wanted access to their workplaces which had been occupied by militants who were fighting against a management plan from the company which was going to put several thousand assembly-line workers in redundancy. They were afraid that a continued confrontation between the *Fiat* governing bodies and the unions might result in further redundancies which could involve their own positions. This massive anti-union demonstration showed how lower middle-class support for hardline anticapitalistic protest was fading out and how the workers front was not as united as it used to be in the previous decade (Lanaro, 1992).

***Nuovi Soggetti Politici*[39]**

Moreover, a new form of suburban proletariat, born out of the economic crisis of the seventies, was emerging. Often living in and out of unemployment, these new political subjects seemed quite disillusioned with the prospect of organised political activism. Their focus was on short-term needs instead: access to work, to housing and even to leisure. Nevertheless, these new subjectivities shared the politicised climate of the times and often participated in marches and protests. Pescetelli (2013) draws a direct link between these *'nuovi soggetti politici'* and that fringe of Italy's youth which was attracted by early punk.

[39] 'New Political Subjects'

For the *Movimento* and the wider leftist front, finding a strategy which could include this new type of proletarians into the long-term revolutionary perspective became one of the many unsolved problems of the late seventies. The difficulties in dealing with these new under-represented groups exposed the difficulties that the radical left was encountering in analysing the changes in Italian society.[40] Nevertheless, not all forces for civic advancement and social change had reached a standstill by the end of the 1970s. In the Introduction and in the Literature Review chapter we have mentioned new critical studies (Bracke, 2014. Masini, 2018 and 2019) which have balanced the traditional negative narrative about the *Riflusso* years. For example, The Italian Feminist movement had been growing steadily throughout the decade and it scored an important victory in 1978 with the popular referendum which resulted in the approval of a law decriminalising voluntary interruption of pregnancy. Often in a dialectical and critical relationship with the Marxist Left, Italian Feminism also contributed to the international debate on women's rights, both in terms of theoretical production and experimentation of social and self-consciousness practices.

However, even if some of the achievements of the Italian Feminist movement found forms of institutional recognition – and implementation – in the 1980s, since the early years of that same decade the country began to progressively drift toward a more conservative cultural climate. According to Bracke, that same process of stabilisation and acquisition of social reforms, paired with an emphatic return to traditional family values, can be seen as a restructuring of patriarchal values in early 1980s Italy: a partial restoration – or a confirmation – of the social, political and economic inequalities which were historically affecting the condition of women in Italian society was already in effect. (Bracke, 2014, pp. 14-15).

[40] With the progressive disbandment of the mass political movement some- predominantly male -elements of this new sub-proletarian youth would contribute to the birth of organised Italian football hooliganism. In their earliest incarnations, these new belligerent football supporters were often imitating the internal hierarchies of the extra-parliamentary groups as well as their imagery and anti-police tactics (see Pescetelli, 2011).

The works of Alessia Masini (2018, 2019) have also contributed to a re-assessment of the *Riflusso* phase. She questioned the consolidated view which sees the late seventies and the early eighties as a period in which the young Italians had retreated *en masse* from the political scene.

> *The Riflusso narrative did not provide a realistic depiction of Italy's youth culture and counterculture which between the years 1978 and 1981 were very much alive and vibrant.* (Masini, 2019, p. 123)

Masini explicitly cites punk as one example of how a desire for social engagement and participation was still present in Italy's youth during the *Riflusso* phase:

> *In the core years of the Riflusso [...] punk was, above all, a response to the crisis of traditional forms of political engagement and to the disenchantment of young people. [...] Punk has bridged politics and commitment between the two decades and shows their persistence in a time when their inexorable end had already been sanctioned, albeit with objectives and forms so renewed as to make them almost unrecognisable if compared to previous categories of the "political".* (Masini, 2018, p. 209)

In her analysis Masini sees this new desire for engagement as being embodied by early eighties Anarcho-punk. I argue that the same desire for participation and re-invention of the political was already present in earliest, late seventies punk: simply these 'new political subjects' expressed their needs for participation in ways which were still mysterious to most of the political analysts of the time.

- **The Cultural Politics of Italy's Marxist Left**

***Neither Washington nor Moscow*: The *PCI* at the End of the Second World War.**

In the final months of the Second World War the *PCI* found itself at a crossroads. With their leading role in the resistance against the Nazi-Fascist occupation, the Italian Communists had gained widespread consensus within the population. Many militants were still in arms and ready to take over the country, riding on the momentum of the *Guerra di Liberazione (Liberation War)*[41]: however, this would have opened the possibility for an extension of the conflict, this time against the Western allied forces and the Italian non-Communist parties. The possible consequences of this perspective were highly unpredictable, both on the national and international scene.

In order to prevent this potentially catastrophic scenario and to avoid the party's isolation within the U.S.-controlled side of the war front, PCI secretary Palmiro Togliatti ordered the demilitarisation of the Italian Marxist freedom fighters. The decision was taken in accordance with the Russian Communist party leaders (Mammarella, 1976).

Togliatti's choice was accepted but it caused a strong debate among the ranks of the party: many Italian Communists felt that the post-war period represented a unique chance for Italy to finally become a Socialist state. The frustrated revolutionary attempt of 1921, whose chaotic aftermath had been a key element in the rapid rise of the Fascist party, represented a grave historical precedent which many Italian Marxists did not want to experience again. Nevertheless, after a heated internal debate which caused a few expulsions and several irreparable divisions within the recently reformed party, Togliatti's USSR-backed line prevailed. As an immediate consequence, the Italian Communist party actively participated in the establishment of the new democratic republic: the PCI essentially contributed to the drawing up of the first Italian republican constitution and accepted to participate in the 1948 democratic elections. The results of the first elections of the republic set the scene for Italy's political landscape for the rest of the twentieth century: the PCI was defeated and relegated to parliamentary opposition, while their

[41] *La Guerra di Liberazione* (1943-1945) was the conflict conducted by Italian partisans (*La Resistenza*), in alliance with the allied military forces, against the occupation of Italy by Germany and the restoration of the Fascist regime after the 1943 armistice.

electoral partners of the Italian Socialist Party began a progressive drift to the centre, gradually severing all their remaining ties with PCI and the Eastern Bloc. On the other side of the political spectrum, the victory of the Democratic Christian party coagulated a political front animated by anti-Communism. Backed by the Catholic Church and by the U.S.A.,[42] *Democrazia Cristiana* managed to remain in power for the following 46 years, often thanks to complex networks of post-electoral alliances always aimed at excluding the PCI from national government. DC presented itself to Italian public opinion as the defenders of Italian traditional values and the guarantees for post-war prosperity and freedom thanks to Italy's positioning in the Western Bloc and their alliance with the U.S.A.

Nevertheless, the PCI leadership managed to persuade its electoral base that they could still lead the country to a gradual transition towards Socialism by way of reforms, parliamentary action and future electoral victories. Until the end of the Cold War period, the PCI's balancing act between the revolutionary rhetoric which continued to fuel the militancy of many of its supporters, and the need to operate within the rules of the Italian democratic constitution, which the party itself had drawn, would become one of the recurring themes in Italy's political life (Vittoria, 2006). Now that it had entered Italy's constitutional arc, the PCI leadership was aware that broadening the support for Socialist ideals in public opinion was crucial in order to gain consensus and augment the chances of winning in democratic elections. Even if, at institutional level, the cultural influence of the Catholic Church was all pervasive in Italian society and US cultural exports were already becoming largely popular among Italians, the PCI could still count on a sympathy for Marxism which was openly demonstrated by many national artists, writers, film makers and intellectuals. In this historical passage the conditions were set for the establishment of the cultural hegemony of the post-war Italian left.

Egemonia Culturale

In his posthumous novel *I Due Amici*, best-selling writer and *PCI* member Alberto Moravia had one of his main characters declare that in post-war Italy *'Communism was the only possible religion for intellectuals'* (Moravia, 2007). In fact, by the end of the Second World War, many Italian intellectuals viewed the PCI as the legitimate political heir of the anti-

[42] President Truman officially gave Democratic Christian Party mandate to manage the Marhsall plan funds for Italy.

Fascist resistance. Marxism was perceived as the only way of putting Italy's Fascist past at bay, as the regime was perceived by many activists as a totalitarian degeneration of Italian capitalism. A large share of Italy's intellectual class was vocally demanding a brand-new start for Italian society, which the compromising attitude of the Democratic Christians was not ready to guarantee. In fact, the Italian post-war ruling class still featured many former Fascist cooperators, whose past had been conveniently forgotten. The Italian public-school system still bore the mark of the 1929 reform, signed by Fascist philosopher Giovanni Gentile. Moreover, the Democratic Christian party and its allies were considered as the tutors of the social privileges and institutionalised inequalities that the regime had helped consolidate during its twenty-year rule. These privileges included the *Patti Lateranensi,* the treaties which Benito Mussolini had signed with the Vatican in 1929: the pacts explicitly expressed the necessity for an alliance between the Fascist regime and the Catholic church against Bolshevism, perceived as a common enemy and a threat to religious values.

Moreover, the *Patti Lateranensi* blurred the lines of separation between church and state that had been established at the time of Italy's unification in the second part of 19th century and, at the same time, further enhanced the influence of the Catholic Church on Italian political and social life (Lanaro, 1992). These treaties were left untouched by the *DC*-led governments of the Italian Republic and, to this day, they are still regulating the relationship between church and state in Italy.

Intellettuali Organici

The desire for a clean discontinuity with the regime, the recent memories of the atrocities of war and the urgent need to make up for the severely impoverished state of most of the Italian population, pushed many Italian intellectuals towards Marxism. These sentiments were provided with a powerful ideological backing by the PCI itself mainly through the publication of Antonio Gramsci's fundamental works *Lettere dal Carcere* (1947) and *Quaderni dal Carcere* (1948-1951), both written during his imprisonment under the Fascist regime: in these texts, questions of cultural hegemony and the role of intellectuals in capitalist societies and in the revolutionary process are widely introduced and explained.

In particular, Gramsci's theorisation of the *'intelletuale organico'* ('organic intellectual') – a key figure for the development of a cultural counter-hegemony which could cut through conservative notions of common sense and social hierarchies brought about by religion,

folklore and traditional values – was embraced by some of the most important names in Italian culture of the time: university professors, scientists, philosophers but also painters, artists and journalists. Acting like the 'Modern Machiavellian Prince' theorised by Gramsci himself, the PCI provided platforms for its intellectuals in the shape of cultural periodicals, conferences, meetings and research foundations such as the *Fondazione Gramsci* ('Gramsci's Foundation'). The party also instituted an internal Cultural Committee (*Commissione Culturale*), led by esteemed intellectuals like Emilio Sereni[43] and Carlo Salinari:[44] due to the high profile of its members and to the quality of its research output *'La Commissione Culturale del PCI'* became one of the most authoritative voices in contemporary Italian culture.

This attention to cultural politics was one of the assets through which Italian Communism affirmed its specific nature and its autonomy from Moscow. For the PCI cultural questions were not just ancillary – as Lenin had famously described them –, to the revolutionary process, on the contrary. Attention to culture, in Gramscian terms, was essential both for the party's political positioning in an Atlanticist context and for setting the conditions for the radical changes to Italian society that the PCI wanted to pursue (Ajello, 1997).

Neorealismo

Since its beginning though, the relationship between the party and its cultured allies was not always free from controversy. The debate between Togliatti and the chief editor of the PCI-influenced culture weekly *Il Politecnico*, Elio Vittorini,[45] revealed the first cracks in the communication between the party and its intellectuals: on several occasions, Vittorini raised issues of freedom of expression within Marxist milieu. This criticism did not sit well with the party leadership and as a consequence the left-wing publishing house *Einaudi*

[43] Emilio Sereni (1907-1977) was an Italian political activist of Jewish origin who, after his forced exile during fascism, became one of the leading figures in Italian Communism. He was a member of the anti-fascist resistance as well. He was a minister of the Italian post-war government between 1946 and 1947.

[44] Carlo Salinari (1919-1977) was an Italian anti-fascist, partisan leader, literary critic and an academic. In 1951, he replaced Sereni as the responsible of the Cultural Commissio of the *PCI*

[45] A former active member of the Communist resistance, Elio Vittorini (1908-1966) was the author of *Uomini e No* (1945), the first novel about the experience of the *partigiani* during the Liberation War. After the *Il Politecnico* experience though, he withdrew his support for the PCI.

decided for the discontinuation of *Il Politecnico* which stopped its publications in 1947 (Vittoria, 2014).

In the popular culture industries field, the party did not exercise such strict control, but it certainly benefited from the widespread sympathy for Marxist ideals which permeated Italy's art world in the immediate post-war period. In particular, sections of the Italian film industry showed a passionate interest for the situation of the poverty-stricken population. This new sentiment found a voice in Neorealist cinema with its focus on themes of social inequality, unemployment and emigration.

Directors such as Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, Giuseppe De Santis, and Luchino Visconti denounced the desperate conditions of the working classes, often left to their own devices after the catastrophic events of the war. Neorealism called for a new season of political engagement by a film industry which under Fascism had offered light-hearted entertainment and evasion to steer public attention away from politics and social issues, when not directly contributing to the regime's propaganda machine.

Often shot on location in the poorest areas of the country and casting non-professional actors, Neorealist films raised the awareness and the sensitivity of the Italian public about the same themes which Italian Communism was addressing with its political action. Not all the Neorealist film makers were members of the PCI, but they certainly acted as 'organic intellectuals' for the Party and more generally for Italian Marxism, thanks to the popularity of many of their films. On the other hand, the DC openly opposed the movement, declaring that the Neorealists portrayed Italy under a negative light and enforcing censorship on several films, including Vittorio De Sica's 'Umberto D' (1951). This dismissive stance was sending out a clear signal to Italian public opinion and to the country's cultural industries: Democratic Christian leaders were not interested in the dramatic social issues which these films were exposing. Furthermore, Italy's ruling party was openly dismissing a movement which gained international praise and was saluted as a potent sign of cultural renaissance for the country. This meant that cutting-edge popular culture had found its home to the left of the political spectrum. For the PCI, Neorealist films embodied that educational approach to popular culture which the *Commissione Cultura* was energetically promoting through the work of Carlo Salinari. As a result, the roots for a cultural counter hegemony by the Italian left on popular culture were planted during the Neorealist period. The support that the PCI showed for Neorealism certainly popularised the idea that the Marxist

milieu was a breeding ground for experimentation and innovation in the field of popular culture and mass entertainment.

It can be argued that Italian Neorealism with its critical and commercial success, set the scene for a new season of Italian popular culture where ideological and political themes became an essential part of mass entertainment. This approach influenced the assessment of popular culture by a large share of the Italian public and by the media, even when they were not under the direct influence of the party. Gramscian ideas about the role of art and entertainment in society were in fact embraced even outside of the Marxist political area and became a fixture of Italy's approach to culture in the second post-war period.

Case del Popolo* and *Feste dell'Unità

The party's tendency to lionise the educational and political mission of pop culture over its entertainment value soon expanded to all areas of mass entertainment, including music. In fact, if the relationship between the left-leaning Neorealist film *intelligentsia* and the PCI was generally positive – albeit with some debate and ideological distinctions – the party maintained a much sterner approach towards popular music. Between the second half of the 1940s and the first half of the 1960s, the PCI generally condemned much of mass culture (comics, pop music, genre cinema, fictional literature). When it did not express an outspoken educational agenda, popular culture was dismissed as a capitalist sub-product and a dangerous distraction from political doctrine and activism. Especially Anglo-American film and music were generally perceived as a form of Atlanticist propaganda which had to be rejected by the Communist youth. Nevertheless, the necessity to provide entertainment for the working classes during political gatherings such as the local *Feste dell'Unità*[46] often times determined a contradiction between the official party line and the common practice of inviting music acts to perform on these occasions: in fact, even if most of the musical entertainment at the *Feste dell'Unità* was made by Italian folklore - at least until the early sixties- the occasional jazz, pop or rock and roll act was sometimes allowed to please the youngest and most culturally aware members. In fact, interest for jazz and rock and roll was beginning to grow within among the Italian youth and this included many young Communists.

[46] Feste dell'Unità (Unity Festivals) were annual political, cultural and entertainment festivals which the party held both at local and national level.

At local level the party was well aware of the popularity of comics, Hollywood and *Cinecittà* films and pop music among its youngest members. These subjects were sometimes debated during the meetings of the PCI's youth organization, *Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana*[47] (*FGCI)*. The meetings were normally held in the party's *Case del Popolo.*[48] During these sessions, most times held on weekly basis, a vast array of subjects was discussed, from political doctrine to everyday teenage problems. Popular films, TV programs and pop music were debated too, under the guidance of experienced local party members whose role was providing the youth with the 'correct' ideological tools to demystify the capitalist entertainment industry (Gundle, 2000).

As stated above, responsibility for these concessions to the popular culture tastes of the young members of the party in most cases must be attributed to the local sections of the PCI: the national party line remained largely opposed to popular culture at least until the mid-sixties when a new breed of 'organic intellectuals' will appear on the music scene in the shape of the *cantautori* (Italian folk singers/songwriters).

However, it can be argued that the *Case del Popolo* and the *FGCI* meetings contributed essentially to the politicisation of all aspects of youth life and culture which characterised Italy in the Cold War period and beyond. This aspect, combined with the generic dismissal of popular music and youth subcultures which informed the official PCI line, shaped the cultural tastes and critical values of that part of Italian society which identified with the progressive values embodied by the Communist party.

By the early sixties though, the so-called *Questione Giovanile* (Youth Problem) became one of the main themes with which PCI was forced to deal, both in ideological and practical terms. In the light of the rise of the Western youth as a new active and vital social subject, the PCI was faced with the need to determine whether the young could be considered as a political subject as well: the difficulties of the party in dealing with new phenomena, which could not be explained with traditional Marxist categories of class, emerged in the case of an issue which involved young people belonging to all levels of Italian society. Nevertheless, questions connected to popular music and culture were not the focus of the party's debate about youth, which remained essentially centered on economics and politics.

[47] Italian Communist Youth Federation.

[48] *Case del Popolo* were the PCI's public houses where militants would gather to spend part of their free time, discuss politics, plan supporting initiatives and get updates about the political situation.

Cantautori

In the first half of the Sixties, the PCI found another unexpected and un-regimented ally in a new generation of politically charged Italian singer songwriters called *cantautori.* The world *cantautore* is a journalistic expression which can be loosely translated as singer-songwriter in the English language. In Italy, this expression is still employed to identify a precise generation of pop/folk artists which brought a new approach to the national popular music scene.

The *cantautori* rejected the traditional Italian music industry role of the *virtuoso* singer who would mainly interpret songs written by professional songwriters and lyricists. To this form of separation of labour, which was deemed as contrived and artificial, the *cantautori* objected with the perceived authenticity of the singer-songwriter who was speaking his/her mind through his/her own music, without necessarily being a skillful singer or instrumentalist. Delivering a political message was considered much more important than being technically proficient or entertaining. The *cantautori* refused the concept of *musica leggera*[49] which had dominated the Italian music industry up to that point: as the world was going through struggles and social change, popular music had a moral duty to give voice to those who were fighting the good fight and to denounce iniquity and injustice. Finally, most of them defiantly refused to participate in the *Sanremo Festival,* which is the annual showcase for the Italian music industries in a song contest format.

The musical inspirations of the *cantautori* were varied and included French/Belgian *chansonnier* existentialism, the Italian political folklore tradition, Latin American protest song and American folksingers such as Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. The *cantautori* called for political and civic engagement in Italian pop music in the same way the Neorealist film-makers had done in the cinema industry. Just like it happened with the Neorealists, not all the *cantautori* sided openly with the PCI: Fabrizio De André, one of the most prominent *cantautori*, never made a secret of his support for Anarchist ideals. Francesco Guccini, another famous *cantautore*, often had a problematic relationship with the party. Nevertheless, like the Neorealists, they increased awareness for political causes which often saw the Italian Marxists on the front line. Furthermore, the *cantautori*

[49] *Musica leggera* (literally 'lightweight music'), as opposed to *musica colta* ('cultivated music') is a commonly used term in Italian media to describe pop music aimed at providing light entertainment.

movement reaffirmed that connection between artistic quality and political engagement which was so important for the post-war Gramscian intellectuals, to the point of being one of the few redeeming factors which PCI was prepared to concede to popular music.

The Post-1968 Shift

As it has been argued in the previous section of this chapter, with the beginning of the cycle of contention of the Long Seventies the *PCI* was hit by the crisis of political representation and by the further expansion and fragmentation of the Marxist front. The hegemony over class struggle by the PCI was now questioned and heavily criticised from the left. Furthermore, for a new generation of post-68 Italian Communists, the struggle for social equality should coexist with the desire for individual freedom which characterised the international student protests.

In fact, tension towards finding a synthesis between collectivist ideals and personal liberties was one of the main characteristics of the Italian 1968 movement: it can be argued that this aspect was as specific to post-1968 Italian Communism, as much as the democratic way to Socialism and the Gramscian approach to culture in the immediate post-war period. In the case of the post-68 period though, it was not the *PCI* that led Italian Marxism towards this new path but parts of a new, combative radical left.

The birth of large extra-parliamentary communist groups such as *Lotta Continua* and *Potere Operaio* meant that PCI and its commissions and journals were not the only official voice of Italian Marxism about politics – as well as culture – anymore.

Often led by intellectuals and supported by artists and musicians, the new extra-parliamentary left[50] equipped itself with its own journals, magazines and radio stations. All over the country initiatives which combined culture (highbrow and popular) music and politics were frequently organised:[51] Italian and international rock bands were regularly invited to play alongside *cantautori* and militant folk acts. Recent international events also worked in favour of a positive reassessment of pop/rock: many young militants associated

[50] Also described as *Sinistra di Movimento* ('Movement Left').

[51] Between 1971 and 1976, the five editions of the *Festival del Proletariato Giovanile* (Proletarian Youth Festival) and their line-up were a typical example of a *Movimento* music-based gathering. The festival was organised by the *Re Nudo* politics and culture magazine with the support of various leftist and libertarian groups.

the new season of protest which was sweeping over Europe and North America with the sound of American and British rock. Therefore, in the most libertarian areas of the extra-parliamentary left, Marxist militancy was not seen as antithetical to a passion for rock music, especially if rock was bringing anti-authoritarian and pro-peace messages which were interpreted as attacks against bourgeois morality and U.S. imperialism. Rock was understood as a sign of the social crisis affecting the United States, whose youth was beginning to experience the contradictions of capitalism, especially through the Vietnam war and the persistence of racism in many states of the federation. Therefore, the same categories of appreciation which had been applied to the Neorealists and the *cantautori* were applied to popular music: late sixties rock was seen as Western popular culture which was redeemed by its social message – be it explicit or inherent – and therefore considered artistically superior to other forms of less politically engaged popular music. The same categories were applied to blues and jazz, as expressions of the struggles of Americans of African heritage whose ancestors had been deported, enslaved and kept in conditions of duress for the needs of the capitalist system. This approach was mirrored by the nascent Italian rock press as it will be argued in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. The generational factor behind this new sympathy for rock music should not be overlooked: many young Marxist radicals were born after the war and had grown up with Italian and international popular music, despite the party's anti-pop stance. *Movimento*-approved rock music was not exclusively international: several rock bands were emerging from the ranks of the Italian leftist protest movement too. Many of these groups were influenced by the folk, jazz rock and prog rock styles which were the main musical trends in Western rock music at the beginning of the seventies. Nevertheless, instead of opting for escapist, personal or fantasy-inspired lyrical subject matter, as it was customary for most of their international counterparts, these bands were still focused on political commitment both in their texts and in their career choices.

According to traditional journalistic narratives (Christgau, 1981), from the early 1970s most rock music started to retire into a self-indulgent dimension. By doing so, it abdicated from its role as the main musical soundtrack for the generation who participated to the protest movement of the 1960s. Artists started producing music and lyrical content which presented themes of self-doubt, intimate feelings, hedonism, or fantasy-inspired escapism

rather than the social engagement or the defiant rebelliousness which characterised many acts of the second half of the 1960s. Even folksingers were less and less interested in being the musical voice of a youthful revolution. Many established artists and successful new acts were steering towards soft rock and personal lyrical content. Most of the bands which had emerged towards the end of the 1960s and were establishing themselves as the new rising stars of rock (Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, Jethro Tull, Yes, ELP) belonged to the heavy metal or progressive rock genres: their lyrics, musical style and stage presentation was inspired by traditional rock and roll sexual imagery and, especially in the progressive rock genre, by fantasy and science fiction rather than social protest or generational angst. Moreover, free rock festivals became an underground phenomenon rather than a gathering for the rock and roll masses. Concert and record prices started to grow too thus making rock culture less of a communal experience and more of a commodity for a generation of fans which had grown up with their favourite artists

However, the case of Italian rock music of the 1970s contradicts this widespread narrative. At the beginning of the decade, Italy was still at the beginning of a long cycle of political contention: the peculiar features of 1970s Italian folk and rock reflected the persistence and the intensification of ideological tension in the country. The Italian *cantautori* intensified their political engagement, often becoming inseparable from the *Movimenti* in the public perception. At the same time, progressive, hard and jazz rock were becoming more and more popular among music fans. These genres, which in other Western countries were often associated with rock's retreat into a dimension of technical self-indulgence[52] and escapism, were embraced by a new generation of Italian musicians and rock aficionados which used them as a platform to combine their love for music and political activism.

In particular, bands like Area and Stormy Six actively embodied the ideals of the Italian movement: in many cases their members divided themselves between music and political activism. These bands were playing free festivals, political marches and promoted social

[52] An exception must be made for British politically active music collectives such as Henry Cow and Matching Mole or solo artists like Robert Wyatt. However, these acts did not reach the commercial success of other jazz rock and progressive musicians of the times. Tellingly, Italy was one of the countries in which these bands and artsists were particularly appreciated both by the music writers and the rock public.

engagement. Squats and various political spaces in Milan, Rome, Bologna and many other Italian cities offered free music courses for the working classes in which prominent Italian progressive musician were volunteering as teachers. Music libraries were made available to anyone by political circles. This approach represented a radical shift from the dismissive and suspicious approach of the PCI towards popular music for many militants from the post-1968 generation music was not a mere vehicle of capitalist propaganda but an essential element of their own collective identity. There was a widespread conviction that access to popular music was a right of the people and should not be considered as a commodity. Music needed to be 'saved' from the capitalist cycle of production, distribution and consumption and had to be given back to the masses for free. Therefore, the music industries became one of the many battlefields on which the struggles of the Italian extra-parliamentary left were being fought: as it will be demonstrated in the following paragraph, the case of the *autoriduzioni* movement can be considered as one of the most significant examples of this critical approach to the marketing of popular music.

Il Rock è Nostro:[53] *The Autoriduzioni Movement*

The campaign for *autoriduzioni* at rock/pop concerts was launched and mainly supported by the Rome based publishing house and political collective *Stampa Alternativa* and by Turin underground politics and culture magazine *Tampax* in the early seventies. The practice of *autoriduzioni* was enforced by groups of activists showing up at venues before a concert and trying to impose a substantial discount on the ticket price, or free entrance, for all attendees. In case the venues or the promoters were not abiding to the demands, the *autoriduttori* would try to get in for free by force. This led to frequent clashes which often escalated into full-scale street riots with the police which would take place outside – and sometimes even inside – concert venues. The reasons behind the campaign lay in the conviction that music was a product of working class labour and a part of the production/alienation/consumption cycle typical of capitalist societies. Therefore, music had to be distributed to the masses free of charge or at affordable prices, just like any other good or commodity.

[53] *Il Rock è Nostro* ('Rock belongs to us', translation by author), was a *Movimento* slogan launched by the *Stampa Alternativa* journal during the *autoriduzioni* campaign. See: Stampa Alternativa (collective author – 1974) 'Riprendiamoci la Musica', Roma

In the context of the Long Seventies, the *autoriduzioni* movement can be seen as part of the larger practice of *esproprio proletario (Working Class Expropriation)*. *Espropri proletari* were another aspect of proletarian self-help tactic of the times – like the occupations of the *Movimento per la Casa* – which were encouraged by the extra-parliamentary Left. Militants, often augmented by groups of students and citizens, would raid the shops demanding reductions of sale prices (*autoriduzioni)* or simply taking goods for free. Most of the goods were later distributed to the population of the area surrounding the shop or market. Inspired by the tactics of the Uruguayan Tupamaros and by the writings of Brasilian revolutionary Carlos Marighella, several radical Italian groups actively enforced *espropri proletari* in food markets, clothing stores and even libraries and record shops. By 1977, *espropri proletari* had become a common practice, as a reaction to increasing inflation and the consequent loss of purchase power of Italian lower-class wages (Crainz, 2003). The practice soon expanded out of the direct control of the extra-parliamentary Left especially in cities like Milan, Naples, Rome and Turin where 'spontaneous' *espropri proletari* were often enacted by random groups of citizens. Even the Red Brigades and other Marxist terrorist groups often claimed that their armed robberies in banks, post offices, shops and armories were *espropri proletari* aimed at supporting as well as financing the revolutionary effort (Galli, 2004).

Due to their nature of public events which brought together large groups of predominantly young people, pop concerts quickly became occasions for the *autoriduttori* to stage this particular version of *espropri proletari*. As argued in the previous paragraphs, rock had become the music of choice for many militants: concerts were occasions in which radicals could get together to the sound of the music which to many of them was an extension of their own collective identity. The *autoriduttori* were drawing the attention of the music loving radicals on the commodification of rock and on the profit-making process which lay behind the live music industry. Concert promoters were painted as villains who were profiting over the militants' right to enjoy their favourite music. The musicians, who profited from ticket prices, were described as enemies of the people. Breaking in for free or asking for discounts on admission was presented as a righteous act of taking music back to the people from the hands of the capitalist market.

The first large scale incident with the *autoriduttori* took place as early as July 5, 1971. The Led Zeppelin concert at the *Teatro Vigorelli* in Milan was interrupted and canceled due to a large-scale riot between the police and young radicals trying to get in for free (Rossi, 2014). The 1971 incident could be filed as a particularly violent version of similar protests which had already occurred in 1970 at international festivals such as Isle of Wight or the Toronto Festival Express. Nevertheless, unlike most of their international counterparts, the Italian *autoriduttori* were not a riotous expression of a rock subculture, on the contrary: they belonged to a larger strategy against market economy which was rooted in the political polarisation of the entire Italian society. In fact, while in the USA and in most of Western Europe similar protests had started to wane by the early seventies, in Italy the frequency of incidents and riots at concerts only intensified throughout the decade: further proof that, differently from what happened in other countries, Italy's cycle of contention was far from being over and that popular music was a battlefield for political struggles just like any other area of society.

In 1973 another incident involved Joan Baez: the American folk singer, who was scheduled to play in Rome, was asked to play an additional free concert for the people of a disadvantaged suburb called *La Magliana* by a group of local activists. Baez initially agreed but then refused to appear for the free show and this caused the outrage of the Roman radicals. *Stampa Alternativa* picketed her evening concert and distributed flyers in which she was described as a '*yankee slave'* (Rossi, 2018). On Saturday March 17, 1973, the first of the two shows that UK progressive band Jethro Tull were performing at Bologna's Palasport, was attacked by political activists who demanded for a reduction of the ticket price. As some protesters tried to break in, riots ensued. At the end of the night 9 attendees were arrested by the police, 26 people were signaled to the authorities on charges of sedition and many other people were reported as having been injured during the clashes.[54] On September 13, 1977, a Molotov bomb exploded onstage during a Carlos Santana concert in Milan. The American guitarist declared to the press that he would never play in Italy again. Signs accusing Santana of being a '*Hateful C.I.A. servant*' had been put up by crowd members during the concert (Rossi, 2018).

[54] Source: http://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/2008/12/16/139315-concerti_bolognesi_jethro_tull.shtml (last access: October 20, 2020)

On February 13, 1975, on the occasion of Lou Reed's live debut in Milan, concert promoter David Zard was captured and held hostage by protesters for two hours, on accusations of being a 'music capitalist'. On the same occasion, Reed's bass player Bruce Yaw was hit on the head with a brick hurled at the stage by a crowd member. The show was stopped after two songs, never to be reprised. Just one of the four shows scheduled for Lou Reed's first Italian tour was completed (Turin, September 12, 1975): the Milan and Rome show were stopped by the riots and the Bologna show was canceled as a precautionary measure. Reed was also accused of 'looking like a fascist' by some Italian militants and by the national press because of his early to mid-seventies leather jacket and short blonde hair image. (Piccinini, 2013, pp. 70-77). The leather and blonde hair look was in fact a trend in the Italian Neo-Fascist underground, but Reed's attire was rather inspired by the New York homosexual night club scene. These accusations were an anticipation for the Italian reaction to the punk look – which had Reed among its precursors – in 1977: they also confirmed how, in an entrenched and polarised society, all external inputs were measured against pre-existing categories which exclusively belonged to Italian socio--political dynamics. This tunnel vision would soon led to isolation: in fact, episodes such as the ones reported above caused a live music embargo towards Italy by the most important international pop/rock acts of the time. This largely unspoken boycott lasted until the end of seventies. Only in September 1979, with two Patti Smith concerts in Florence and Bologna, the international rock embargo was considered finally over.[55]

The situation had an impact on the record sales of international rock bands. International pop music acts who were mostly marketed through radio and television – and who did not rely on live reputation to build their own following – were not negatively affected in their record sales. Italian popular music was the best-selling genre throughout the decade. Italian progressive and jazz rock groups and singer songwriters sold consistently as well, in spite of the controversies often accompanying their performances and careers.[56]

[55] Nevertheless, some anglo-american rock bands, who were for the most part associated with the underground and free festival scene – such as Van Der Graaf Generator and Gong – still managed to tour Italy consistently during the rock embargo years.

[56] Source: https://www.hitparadeitalia.it/classifiche/index.html, last access March 1, 2019

Essentially, it was international rock music which suffered the most in terms of sales, as the substantial lack of live activity proved lethal to its popularity.

Nevertheless, the *autoriduttori* did not spare Italian performers, especially those who were believed to have a political responsibility by the Movement. Concerts by Italian *Movimento*-related *cantautori* Antonello Venditti and Francesco De Gregori were stormed and hijacked by protesters who accused the politically engaged singers/songwriters of being sell-outs. During the April 2, 1976 performance by Francesco De Gregori at Milan's *Velodromo Vigorelli*, the *autoriduttori* crashed the show, interrupted the concert and put the artist under what the *Movimento* described as a *proletarian trial* right on the stage. Threatening the singer at gunpoint, the protesters held De Gregori captive in front of the audience for half an hour, questioning his earnings, his betrayal of the Marxist cause and what they considered his exploitation of leftist ideals for commercial purposes. The trial only ended because De Gregori managed to sneak into his dressing room, thanks to police intervention. Soon after, he declared that he would never perform in public again.[57] He also compared the methods of the *autoriduttori* to those of the fascist death squads of the Mussolini regime. Even Lucio Dalla, a relatively non-politicised singer, was attacked with a Molotov bomb during a 1978 show in Milan (Rossi, 2018).

The *autoriduzioni* movement vividly exemplifies how popular music and politics were inextricably intertwined during the Long Seventies. Debate over popular music, and especially *serious* rock and folk, was part of the new approach to contention which characterised the Italian Long Seventies. The militants, frustrated by the lack of a realistic revolutionary perspective and by the failures of both the PCI and the extra-parliamentary left towards this end, now wanted their 'needs' to be catered for 'here and now'. Music was considered as a part of these needs, to signify that cultural items were not merely 'ancillary' to the experience of the Italian left but an essential part of its identity and an instrument of political struggle. Under this perspective, huge expectations were laid on the shoulders of musicians, especially those who had been adopted by the *Movimento* as their flag bearers. Musicians, Italian and international, were continuously expected to act like political militants. Their music, their looks and their career choices were scrutinised and expected to be in line with the purposes of the *Movimento*.

[57] De Gregori actually returned to the stage in Autumn 1976.

Radio Libere

In the mid-seventies, another important event helped shaping the relationship between the *Movimento* and popular music. In 1974 and in 1976, the Italian parliament approved a series of laws which discontinued state monopoly over local TV and radio frequencies. This legislative change was going to determine important consequences for the country. In fact, the birth of Italian private broadcasting would not have been possible without the 1974-1976 laws: further updates to the laws would allow Silvio Berlusconi's TV channels to expand from regional to national broadcast. Nonetheless, it was the extra-parliamentary left who took immediate advantage of the new legislation: a significant number of independent radio stations, which were directly connected to the various expressions of Italy's Marxist left, began their transmissions between 1974 and 1976 (Doro, 2017). To underline their independence from the state and from commercial radio rules the radio stations of the *Movimento* were calling themselves *Radio Libere* ('Free Radios'). *Radio Libere* soon became an essential voice in the struggles of the Long Seventies. Stations *like Radio Città Futura* (Rome), *Radio Popolare* (Milan) and *Radio Alice* (Bologna) fulfilled multiple functions: they hosted political debates, aired live reports of marches, coordinated demonstrations, provided news service and collected the direct voice of the militants through open telephone lines. During the very frequent clashes with law enforcement the *Radio Libere* often played a strategic role, updating the protesters in real time about changes in tactic and sometimes even giving them clues about the movements of the riot police.[58] The musical playlist of the *Radio Libere* both mirrored and influenced the taste of the militants. The typical *Radio Libere* popular music playlist included *cantautori*, jazz, progressive rock, folk, traditional Italian political songs – sometimes revisited by contemporary acts such as Giovanna Marini, Paolo Pietrangeli or *Nuovo Canzoniere Popolare* –, South American (especially Chilean) protest songs. Playlists were often

[58] During a time of special anti-terrorism laws, these and other daring practices caused several problems between *Radio Libere* and law enforcement, often leading to arrests and the closing down of stations as in the case of the police raid in the *Radio Alice* studios during the March 1977 riots in Bologna. In other cases, the *Radio Libere* were made objects of neo fascist attacks: one of the most notorious episodes involved the neo fascist terrorist group Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari. On January 9 1979, the neo-Fascists attacked the *Radio Città Futura* studios in Rome with firearms, injuring several activists.

approved in collective meetings during which the political consistency of songs and artists was discussed. Since *Radio Libere* refused to finance themselves through commercial advertisement, fund raising festivals became a frequent occurrence: these events often listed rock bands from the Italian progressive and jazz rock scene. In early 1976, a national federation of seventy-five left wing *Radio Libere* was created for the purpose of establishing a mutual support network: F.R.E.D. – acronym for *Federazione Radio Emittenti Democratiche* (Democratic Radio Stations Federation) – allowed the implementation of initiatives and the diffusion of specific broadcast at interregional and sometimes national level: this improved the coordination between cities during protests, political initiatives and moments of particularly harsh state repression. It also unified the music taste of the *Movimento* (Doro, 2017). *Radio Libere* helped building the collective musical identity of the Left and reinforced the tight connection between music and politics which characterised the Italian Long Seventies. Historically, the establishment of the *Radio Libere* in the second half of the seventies coincided with the intensification of political violence and with the early stages of the *Riflusso*. When punk reached Italy in late 1977, *Radio Libere* were fully established as one of the most vital and influential expressions of the hopes, feelings and cultural tastes of Italy's Marxist left. In chapters 6, 7 and 8 of the present work, it will be argued that support, or lack thereof, by *Radio Libere* for punk was essential to the fortune of this subculture in leading *Movimento* cities like Milan, Rome and Bologna.

Conclusions

With the present chapter my aim was to delineate the close-knit relationship between rock music and politics in late-seventies Italy. Briefly reconstructing the history of the relationship between Italian Marxism, which was leading the cultural debate in the country, and popular culture was a necessary passage to introduce the conditions under which punk was received in Italy during the *Riflusso* phase of the Long Seventies. The way in which popular music was dragged into the political battlefield is tightly connected with the cultural politics of the Italian post-war left and its Gramscian approach to culture, which saw intellectuals and artists at the forefront of the ideological struggles. In my perspective, the passages which opened the way to the capillary politicisation of popular culture in Italy were marked by the arrival of Neorealist cinema of the 1940s and, in popular music, by the

season of the *cantautori* and their association with the Italian cycles of political contention. By the late 1960s, the leading role in the political struggles and in the cultural debate shifted from the *PCI* to the extra-parliamentary groups which were born to the left of the party. Through their cultural agents – *Radio Libere*, the free festivals, and the *autoriduzione* movement – the extra-parliamentary left imposed its cultural hegemony over pop/rock music and its perception by a large share of Italy's public opinion. The politicisation of Italian progressive, folk and jazz rock was a further step towards this overlapping of musical and political identities. The next chapter will show how the newborn Italian music press mirrored this dynamic.

Chapter V

Punching Life in the Face: Early Reports about Punk in the Italian Print Press

Introduction

This chapter will analyse the reception and assessment of first-wave punk by the Italian print press. Particular attention will be paid to issues of ideology and politics, cultural identity and musical aesthetics, as they were inextricably intertwined in the Italian discourse on popular music of the time. It will be argued that this early discourse has decisively influenced the perception of punk in Italian popular culture and society both at national and local level. I am also arguing that the seeds for the rejection of punk, on the grounds of political 'nihilism' by a large share of the 1977 Movement can be traced back to the early presentation of punk in the Italian media. These mediated narratives on punk have been an essential agent in the formation of many Bolognese punk identities too. Early reports by the national press – and television – often represented the first exposure to punk for many Italians, including those who would later become directly involved with the scene. In many cases, some of these media features have been the only source of information on punk for a considerable amount of time. Especially in the years 1976 and 1977, the availability of punk music in Italy was extremely scarce due to issues of distribution and to the general lack of interest for the genre by retailers and radio broadcasters (Pescetelli, 2013, pp. 30-35). Therefore, it is extremely important to take these texts into account in order to better understand how ideas and narratives about punk were already circulating via the printed press months before the music which was associated with this subculture had reached the record shops or the major radio stations. Information about punk as a social phenomenon and as a subcultural style through the print press enjoyed a wider reach in terms of audience than record distribution or live music, at least in the early years (1977-1978). As argued by Sarah Thornton:

> *'Contrary to youth subcultural ideologies, "subcultures" do not germinate from a seed and grow by force of their own energy into mysterious 'movements' only to be belatedly digested by the media. Rather, media and other culture industries are there and effective right from the start. They are central to the process of subcultural formation.'*(1995, P.117)

I have divided the print press sources about punk in three categories:

1. Political journals, newspapers and magazines published directly by parties and/or political groups.
2. Music magazines, with focus on the newborn Italian rock press
3. Lifestyle, culture, news and generic youth magazines

I have dedicated particular attention to the political press category, given the influence of ideological discourse on the criticism and assessment of popular culture and music in late seventies Italy. The register, tone and ideological premises of the political press was largely shared by all the main Italian music papers of the time. Relevant examples of punk's reception by the specialised music press will be presented too, to remark how all discourse about pop/rock in Italy was part of an ideological framework.

In the final section of the chapter, focus will shift to culture, lifestyle and youth periodicals: many of these publications covered punk with reports between 1977 and 1980. Just like the music press, lifestyle and youth periodicals were decisively influenced by the political rhetoric and the social polarisation of the country: their approach to punk is an example of how much ideology – especially Marxism – had been integrated at all levels of Italian public discourse during the seventies.

1) **Punk in the Italian Political Press**

During the course of the seventies, the number of youth-oriented political magazines and papers which were being published on the Italy territory increased significantly (Colombo, 2012).

Issued by political groups and parties, or by affiliated or sympathetic publishing houses, these periodicals aimed at providing ideological analysis of important social issues for the benefit of the politically conscious youth. These journals were also interested in covering aspects of youth life which ranged from sexuality to school, and from family relations to popular culture in general. Popular music was one of the main focuses as the pop song was considered an important 'territory of expression of the emerging characteristics of the juvenile classes' (Colombo, 2012, p.77).

The vast majority of the publications belonged to the wide and multi-faceted Italian Marxist area. These magazines complemented the work of the *Case del Popolo, Circoli del Proletariato Giovanile* and/or of similar information political education agencies which belonged to the many branches of the wider Marxist movement, be it parliamentary or extra-parliamentary. The journals of the extra-parliamentary left gave voice to the different currents of Italian post-68 Marxism, both in terms of political guidelines and cultural criticism. Especially in the case of *Creative Wing* journals like *Re Nudo* and *A/Traverso*, irony, nonsense and sarcasm were systematically employed as tools of rhetorical struggle and, in the intentions of the editors and contributors, used to deconstruct capitalist superstructures.

Nevertheless, the other areas of the Italian political landscape had their own publications too. The Democratic Christian Party (*Democrazia Cristiana*) and the Catholic Church – besides largely influencing the Italian public education and mass media system, managing the *catechismo*[59] afternoon sessions, controlling the Italian Boy Scout network and exercising almost complete monopoly on private education – had their own popular culture and lifestyle publications as well. Weekly magazines *Famiglia Cristiana* (Christian Family) and *Il Sabato (*Saturday), even if not exclusively aimed at a young readership, provided a

[59] Religion courses delivered by local churches to children who were preparing to take Catholic sacraments such as The First Communion and Confirmation.

Catholic perspective on the transformations of Italian society and had columns on music and popular culture in general.
In this crowded landscape, even the Neo-Fascists could count on their own youth-oriented press with magazines like *Linea* and *La Voce Della Fogna (The Voice of the Gutter)*.

Historically, the assessment of pop/rock music and culture by the Italian post-war neo fascist right was a deeply negative one: pop/rock was dismissed as a sign of the mollification of the once belligerent Italian youth and a disastrous and decadent feature of the cultural imperialism, imposed by a racially mixed Western world (Tassinari, 2008, p. 220). International pop and in particular rock music, which the leftist youth seemed to have embraced with such passion, were widely rejected and condemned as decadent and culturally 'contaminated'. The right-wing had its own folkish singer/songwriters/groups though, and some of its younger members did appreciate specific pop singers who were not openly affiliated with the left.[60] Nevertheless, popular music and especially rock were considered a Communist affair. The influence of Catholicism on the moral values of the Italian neo-fascist certainly reinforced this negative assessment of rock/pop. In fact, not even the emergence of post-modern takes on Fascist Ideology in the mid-seventies, such as those expressed by the rising extra-parliamentary group *Terza Posizione* (Third Position) managed to change rock's status in the fascist milieu. Former Third Position militant and future Senator of the Italian Republic Marcello De Angelis reported about his *camerata* Roberto Nistri and his appreciation of some glam rock and pre-punk acts in the following terms:

> *He had been a Velvet Underground fan since 1976. At that time, the comrades were still obsessing over [Italian pop rock star] Lucio Battisti or Celtic folk. In the early Third Position days, he would sometimes throw house parties with other young kids and play Bowie or Lou Reed albums. He had to keep all this hidden from Fiore though (Roberto, Third Position leader) as he would have given him a hard time for listening to that unholy, devilish music.* (Nistri in Tassinari, 2008, p.226)

[60] Pop singer/songwriters Lucio Battisti and Claudio Baglioni were very popular among the general public. In the case of Lucio Battisti, who was suspected of being a right-wing sympathiser, some lyrics were seen as hints to the Neo-Fascist subculture by both the Marxists and the Neo-Fascists.

On the outer fringes of the youth oriented right-wing press though there was a magazine called *La Voce Della Fogna*[61] which had started its publications in 1974. Born out of an irredentist fraction of the Florentine neo-fascist underground, the journal was trying hard to refresh the Italian right-wing approach to popular culture. To achieve that, *La Voce Della Fogna* opted for a sarcastic and *blasé* tone, as opposed to the usual nostalgic and self-pitying approach of the institutional right, embodied by the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI) party (Tassinari, 2013). Showing appreciation for popular culture was part of a strategy aimed at luring the youth towards a hip neo-fascist *weltanschauung*. Among comic strips, satirical portraits and political vignettes, *La Voce della Fogna* had cultural columns with attractive 'young' sounding titles. There was a cinema column called *Ciak*, a book/press review section (*Torchio*[62]) and two music columns, *In Ascolto*[63] and *Pop.* Crucially, the latter would host the first ever feature about punk on the Italian press on the January 12, 1977 issue of *La Voce della Fogna.*[64]. The article bore the German-language title of *Nazional-Sozialistiche Arbeiter Musik*[65]. The author was Jack Marchal a French right-wing militant based in Italy who was renowned in the Franco/Italian Neo-fascist milieu for being a satirist and a comic writer.[66]

In line with the sarcastic tone of the magazine, Marchal presented the UK and U.S. punk and proto punk scenes in *gonzo* journalism style. Pretending to be a professor delivering a lecture to a class of 'little rats', as he affectionately calls his readers, Marchal ironically

[61] '*Voice of the Gutter*'. '*Fascisti carogne, tornate nelle fogne!*' (Go back in the gutter, rotting fascist corpses!') is to this day a popular marching chant of the Italian left: the name of the magazine was meant to be a sarcastic take on the slogan.

[62] A *torchio* is a wine or oil press. The metaphorical expression '*essere sotto torchio'* in Italian means being under interrogation or heavy scrutiny.

[63] 'In the act of listening'.

[64] Marchal, J., 'National-Sozialistische Arbeiter Muzik', *La voce della fogna*, issue 12, January 1977, pp. 15-20

[65] 'Nazi working-class music'.

[66] A member of the French extremist group *Groupe Union Défense*, Marchal was responsible for the *Rat Noir* (Black Rat) satirical comic strip, which in Italy became known as *Topo MIS (*acronym of the neo-fascist party *Movimento Sociale Italiano).* The *Rat Noir/Topo MIS* quickly became an icon for the Franco-Italian right-wing youth and was also the hero of the comic-strip series *Les Rats Maudits,* published in the French satirical magazine *Alternative. (Pescetelli, 2013, p. 76)*

introduces his piece as an '*Introduction to an historical, structural and thematic approach to Nazi-rock and roll*) (1977:pp. 15-20).Throughout the article, the writer is employing a sarcastic and detached tone. He provides an example of selective historical narrative by weaving together a series of episodes and rumours which he considers as clues of a sympathetic attitude by some rock acts towards totalitarian or neo-pagan ideas and imagery. He claims to be aware of *'unverifiable rumors'*[67] according to which some Led Zeppelin members might be right-wing sympathizers. On the contrary, David Bowie is referred to as having recently proven to be a *'true Nazi*'. In the USA, he claims, the intersection between Bowie's decadence and Led Zeppelin's heavy sound has spawned the punk style. The first specimens of this new sound have been the Stooges from Detroit and the Velvet Underground from New York. He also mentions hard rocker Alice Cooper as a possible, even if less accredited forerunner. The author then tries to give a proto-sociological, albeit sarcastic, analysis of US punk:

> *In a nutshell, punk means decadence, screaming, shamelessness, thug-o-cracy, jewelry and, we had to get there sooner or later, swastikas. Crucial point: the punk group, in order to claim this title, must have started their career in an open-air rubbish dump, preferably close to a parking lot in an overcrowded (white) working class suburb.* (1977: pp. 15-20).

Marchal's article continues with a disdainful description of the Velvet Underground's inner circle – '*putrefying snobs'* he calls them – and a dismissal of Lou Reed's solo career. Even the Stooges, whose music is described as an '*unparalled peak of primitiveness*', are not capable of vindicating the band's notorious reputation with their recorded output, according to Marchal. Nevertheless, the *Raw Power* album is classified as *'not bad at all'* in the article. A list of US punk/proto-punk or hard rock bands follows with very concise remarks for each group by the author. New York's punk forerunners The New York Dolls and The Ramones are quickly dismissed. He praises Blue Oyster Cult, particularly for their song *Messerschmitt 262*, whose title was inspired by a Second World War German experimental jet fighter airplane. When Marchal namedrops The Dictators, he claims that

[67] All italics between inverted commas are by Marchal (1977, pp. 15-20) until noted otherwise.

'clearly there's something wrong here', ironically suggesting that the band's name might reveal a sympathy for totalitarianism. To end his North American rock/punk overview, he nonchalantly mentions the Kiss logo, in which the double 'S' of the band's name are designed using the *Waffen SS* lettering. Nevertheless, the author dismisses the band as *'spectacular but artificial'*. In fact, *'all the music that this rabble is making is terribly primitive'* he finally remarks, summing up the US scene. He also regrets the fact UK bands such as Eddie & The Hot Rods and Dr. Feelgood, which he considers far superior to their American counterparts, are showing no signs of right-wing tendencies. On the contrary, talking about Dr. Feelgood Marchal closes, *'those riff raff [Dr. Feelgood] are extremely successful in all the ultra-leftist festivals, shit!*'.

Instead of exposing a supposedly ambiguous political side of punk, Marchal's article reveals more of the debate which was animating the Italian right-wing milieu at the time. Since the post-war period the Neo-Fascists had been left out of the cultural battlefield in Italy. The war for cultural hegemony was mainly fought between the Democratic Christian Party, backed by the Catholic church with its vast area of influence and the Italian Marxist world, spearheaded by the PCI and its army of sympathetic, albeit at times not aligned, school teachers, film-makers, writers, journalists, artists and musicians. It was thanks to the support from a large share of the most cutting-edge and popular parts of Italian society that the conviction that the left had won the cultural wars had managed to penetrate the Italian public conscience, even though the Catholics still maintained a firm control over the Italian public-school system and national TV and radio.

The post-68 climate had spawned a new generation of culturally conscious Italian right wingers who were trying to detect signs of political affinity in various areas, in order to build their own contemporary popular culture Pantheon (Tassinari, 2008, pp. 197-202). This new approach, embraced by the radical extra-parliamentary right, differed significantly from the traditionally plaintive and submissive tone of institutional Neo-Fascists, which considered the cultural war a lost cause and a product of post war's Italy condemnation of the Fascist regime. Since most of the popular culture space had been already occupied by the left, the right wing was looking for uncharted territory where it could project its new desire for cultural recognition: hence their appropriation of some otherwise non-political pop singers. Moreover, the way in which seventies Anglo-American rock and pop music reflected the disillusionment of the 1968 generation did lend itself to – largely unsuccessful,

it must be said – some attempts at appropriation from the Italian right. In a country like Italy – which was in the middle of social unrest and political turmoil – references to historical figures, problematic ideologists and the use of controversial iconography by rock artists – which in most cases were a mere aesthetic vehicle or the expression of a momentary interest – were often interpreted as indicators of ideological belonging. From the end of the sixties rock had always been left-wing territory in Italy, both in terms of musical practice, consumption and critical discourse. The simple fact that, by early 1977 the left-wing music magazine had not covered punk yet, had raised a cautious interest in some unorthodox neo-fascists like Marchal: after all, punk claimed to be anti-rock and, most importantly, had yet to be assigned ideologically. The left clearly seemed to be uncomfortable with it and *La Voce della Fogna* tried to step into that analytical void to verify if there was some cultural *terroir* in which the new Italian right could take root.

The detached and sarcastic tone that Marchal adopts in his piece shows how, as a right winger, he is venturing into uncomfortable territory. He feels compelled to establish a degree of ironic detachment from the subject: from a fascist point of view, even when not openly siding with the left, rock was still a product of cultural miscegenation and the breeding ground of moral decay (drug consumption, sexual ambiguity, anti-authoritarian behaviour). Nevertheless, punk rock had yet to be assigned ideologically, due to the Marxists' surprising lack of coverage of this specific subculture. The difficulties by the Italian left in reading the language of punk has been a key element in triggering the interest of the radical *Destra Sociale*. The fact that this attempt at appropriation by the right was once again unsuccessful demonstrates how punk was not easily explainable with the Italian ideological categories of the time. In any case, for the mere fact that the first Italian press feature on this subculture had appeared on a Neo-Fascist journal, Marchal's article has certainly contributed to the confusion about the political nature of punk in Italy.

On the opposite side of the political spectrum from *La Voce della Fogna*, there was *Re Nudo (*Naked King*)*, one of most important journals of the Italian counterculture of the 1970s. The magazine was behind the organization of the 1976 *Parco Lambro* festival, which was

one of the defining moments leading to the crisis of the Italian radical movement of the seventies. The festival's chaotic proceedings had also brought to the fore the insurgence of a new generation of radical youth which were interested in the immediate recognition of their own identities and needs (Bertante, 2005). At the same time, these new subjectivities were much less fascinated by a long-term revolutionary project. *Re Nudo* had been giving voice to this new type of unaligned radical sensibility since the early seventies. Founded in 1970, *Re Nudo* predated the approach of the *Creative Wing* of the 1977 movement in many ways. *Re Nudo's* implicit assumption was that, as it often happens with counter-cultural movements, the recognition and practice of one's own subjective needs and aspirations should not be achieved after the success of a future Marxist revolution: on the contrary, subjective and individual needs had to be affirmed and recognised 'here and now' and should be put at the epicenter of the struggle. Irony, Situationist pranks and manifest irreverence towards structures of power were deployed systematically as tactics to let individuals express their full revolutionary potential (Colombo, 2013, p. 80). It is under this ideological, or post-ideological, perspective that sub-cultural expressions like UK punk became subject of *Re Nudo*'s interest for at least one special report which came out in the May 1977 issue of the magazine.

The *Re Nudo* punk feature is written in the form of a travelogue by a non-identified 'comrade' and correspondent who, during an extended visit to London, happened to have multiple street encounters with punks. Those fortuitous meetings sparked his curiosity for this new subculture which was totally mysterious to him. The reporter felt compelled to investigate in person, but first he tried to share his curiosity with Falcon, his British housemate:

> (*Re Nudo*) '*What the hell is going on in London? It's almost three years now since my last time here but…whatever happened to the good old hippies? What does this new scene stand for?'*
>
> *'That's Punk rock – said Falcon – one cycle is over, another one is here now, it's the new form of youthful rebellion.'*
>
> *'Punk Rock? What is that? – I replied.*
>
> *Falcon gave me a look of forbearance: 'You Italians just never change: you always want to understand everything through ideological discourse. You seem to think that*

> *something is not happening if you can't apply your theory to it. You want an answer to everything through political analysis…just hang around and see what's going on!'*(Re Nudo, 1977)

This piece of reported dialogue, be it fictional or real, highlights the post-ideological approach typical of *Re Nudo* and of the *Ala Creativa* of the 1977 *Movimento,* according to which the new subjectivities which were emerging in the second half of the seventies were not explicable through the analytical framework of classic Italian Marxism. The reporter, while being on the receiving end of Falcon's reproach, is actually speaking through the words of his housemate. Through this rhetorical device, Falcon is actually reading out *Re Nudo*'s editorial line: the Italian radical left must adopt a fresher, less schematic approach in order to understand the new *zeitgeist*.

Following his housemate's advice, the reporter decides to pay a visit to the Roxy Club, on the occasion of an X-Ray Spex show. The first element that leaves an impression on him is the sexual ambiguity which characterised the early punk scene.

> *The boys are all wearing make-up: the already blurred boundaries of normative sexual identity have been totally blown away here. On the contrary, the girls look very tough, so that the ambiguity is now total. Everyone is waiting for Poly-Sterin (sic)*[68] *and her band to take the stage.* (1977)

The X-Ray Spex show is described with a mixture of awe and bedazzlement. The reporter is fascinated by the raw energy and the frenetic noise that the band is generating on-stage and by the lyrics, which he defines as obsessive, repetitive and mantra-like. He's particularly impressed by the two female members of X-Ray Spex, Poly Styrene and saxophonist Lora Logic with their leading role in the group's performance*: 'they seem to be two really angry girls supported by three burned-out, broken men'*[69]. The crowd's reaction to the music is also described in detail, with a specific mention to people '*swinging from left to right'* and '*jumping up and down'*: they were doing what, unbeknownst to the author, was already

[68] The author is referring to Poly Styrene, X-Ray Spex's singer and lyricist.

[69] All quotations in the text are by Re Nudo, n. 53, May 1977, until noted otherwise.

called *pogo* dancing. It seems, he writes, that '*everyone wants to act ungracious, nonsensical and disharmonic*'. He is also impressed by the predominantly non-verbal interaction among the punters:

> *Another thing which has struck me deeply is that nobody's really talking to each other. Nevertheless, everyone seems to know each other through a magical tribal sign from which I am most certainly excluded […] Perhaps, to put it in Gertrude Stein's terms, one might argue that punk is punk, it's punk and that's all. (1977)*

Nevertheless, he notices, physical – and even sexual – interaction is still very present, albeit with a new behavioural code, which does not imply formal manners or even old hippie sensuality. This unspoken code is embraced the members of what the author describes as a real 'tribe'. Another element that sticks out is the proto-DIY nature of the punk look.

> *[…] the scene is hand-made, it can't be described as a form of fashion. It's more a matter of wearing the most ragged, crazy and rickety garments imaginable. I think that I'm catching some signs of a primal, basic form of irreverence. But obviously I'm still very far from having some sort of grasp on what's really going on here. (1977)*

Finally, the author manages to approach Poly Styrene and saxophonist Lora Logic for a brief interview. The author asks the two female musicians several questions about punk. In reply, Lora Logic and Poly Styrene give the *Re Nudo* reporter a passionate and encompassing description of various aspects of punk music, style and ethos. They explain how punk is a totally new style because it's coming from the marginalised, working class youth. The punks are full of anger towards everything that came before them, including the hippies whose scene, they claim, was essentially a bourgeois creation whereas *'[the punk style] is the rebellion of the unemployed and the marginalized. It's the triumph of the poor, the miserable and the outrageous'.* They continue by claiming that the rock music of the sixties and the seventies did not mean anything to them: rock became inoffensive and '*nice*', its creators were old, bloated and completely controlled by the music industry.

In contrast, punk music is created independently from the record business: it's outrageous and obnoxious, therefore it is ignored or even feared by anyone over twenty and by the record industry.

> *We did not live the Beatles and Rolling Stones era. We want to create the sounds of our time by ourselves. […] They play the music of the system, we are playing rebellion rock, today's rock. We have created punk rock, which is anti-musical, dirty and noisy. […] record companies are afraid of us […] Enough with the rock poets: [we sing] tough and outrageous lyrics which are dealing with our everyday reality.* (1977)

The punk sensibility and sociality even predates the music, according to the X-Ray Spex members: '*[…] the punk scene produced punk music, not the other way around. Unlike the sixties psychedelic scene, punk is not the product of a music trend.'*

Another important aspect of punk rock lies in its accessibility:

> *In London alone, there are thousands of punk bands today. The great thing about this is that anyone can do it. Who said that you have to know notes in order to play? Any kid can grab an instrument and bang away, make noise, scream […] everyone can express themselves not just the cheesy professional songwriters. (1977)*

When asked about the visual aspect of punk the musicians admit that their style has been influenced by Lou Reed, David Bowie and pop art aesthetics, even if punk is way more ragged, vulgar and provocative.

> *We've always been wearing these rags. It's just that now we make a show out of them. It's a punch to the face of Carnaby Street and the Swinging London fashion system. (1977)*

Finally, the reporter confesses to X-Ray Spex that punk looked quite violent to him: Poly Styrene and Lora Logic strongly deny any allegation of violence in the scene.

> *Not at all! Punk may look violent because it is outrageous and unruly but it is aggressive only under an aesthetic point of view, it is not violent. Obviously, there is an anarchist vibe around it. […] our flagship song is a Pistols' song 'Anarchy in the UK': because of that talking about punk violence has been easy for the media. It's what they do when they write about things they don't understand. (1977)*

Compared to the article by *La Voce della Fogna*, the approach of *Re Nudo* appears to be much more inquisitive and genuinely curious: here the reporter regrets his inability to understand punk. Hence his desire to approach Poly Styrene and Lora Logic for an interview. It must be noted how this is the first interview of punk musicians in the Italian media. Even if gender is barely mentioned in the article, it is important to underline how the first voices of UK punk to ever appear on the Italian press were women. In fact, *Re Nudo* had always been open towards the Feminist movement and it hosted several columns by female activists. Thanks to this reportage, Lora Logic and Poly Styrene have the chance to introduce an Italian readership to the key features of punk's ethos and aesthetics. Another important aspect of the *Re Nudo* article is that the reporter is openly recognising the limitations of his ideological background in understanding the punk subculture. The fact that the author wants to meet the punks and speak to them, instead of just reviewing their scene, testifies for an inclusive and participative approach which was a rarity in the Italian press coverage of punk, as we will see in the following sections of the present chapter.

However, discourse over popular music was not an exclusive prerogative of the radical press. The *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI) often did write about popular culture on the pages of its official journal, *L'Unità*. Nevertheless, the first feature about punk on the pages of *L'Unità* came out on November 1, 1977, with considerable delay compared to the *Re Nudo* and *La Voce della Fogna* specials.

In an extensive article, journalist Claudio Bianchi criticized punk and its Italian appropriation in an article called '*Quel Pasticciaccio Brutto della Musica Punk*', which can be translated as 'Punk Music's Ugly Mess'. The first part of the article is about some early sightings of Italian punks. Various episodes involving punk fans and the police are mentioned as well. A casual swing at punk's perceived political ambiguity is made when the author claims that '*some right wingers showed up'* to attend some non-specified punk show in Milan. In the article,

the defiant attitude of the punks and their obsession with clothes and the visual aspect of their own subculture is described with sarcasm and disdain. The author then gives a brief account of a Southern Italy show by punk associated French band Larry Martin Factory. The author stresses how the band received a very high economic fee for their performance. In the second part of the article the journalist uses these premises to dismiss punk as a music and fashion industry artefact. He makes a comparison between punk and the early sixties Italian Beat movement:

> *In the first half of the sixties, following the lead of the Californian counter-cultural movement, the early 'beats' made their appearance in Italy. The first ones to adopt this definition for themselves were some elements belonging to the maladjusted, marginalized youth classes [….] They were a warning signal of the 1968 protest and it took some time before this phenomenon was eventually caught up in a marketing strategy […] Today, these spaces for autonomy don't exist anymore: the punk phenomenon is entirely managed by the combined interests of the music and fashion industries […]*(Bianchi, 1977: p.3)

According to Bianchi, the emergence of punk is also a signal for the downfall of the radical *Movimento* and for the emergence of a new post-political youth:

> *The punk phenomenon, both at the musical and social level, takes root where the crisis of the counter-culture is already taking place, that is among the so-called stray dogs of the suburban areas. Partly, the punks are a symptom for the crisis: they are expressing a traumatized, nihilistic form of social anxiety caused by the failure of certain ideological and existentialist promises: it is exactly in this empty space that the music and fashion industry is sneaking in.* (1977: p. 3)

The punks' scandalous look, provocative sexual behaviour and self-harm practices are classified as a sign of a new type of rising urban distress on which the industry is profiting.

> *In a disjointed urban context, the exhibitionism of the punk kids – the chains, the ripped clothes, the clownish colours – is expressing a desire to say, 'we're here',*

> *albeit in aggressive, cumbersome and masochist ways. [Punk] aims at substituting the mythology of the political group with the tribe's lack of ideological commitment, political militancy with aesthetic gestures, music with noise, screams and disorder. The mystique of masochism is rampant where the demands of the young are left unsatisfied: therefore, we have the feminists on one side and the punk girls on a dog leash on the other. In the same way, the needle-pierced skin of the heroin addicts is transferred on a symbolic plane by the punks who are piercing their own skin with safety pins.* (1977: p. 3)

From its openly dismissive title *L'Unità* article is an accurate portrait of the suspicious approach that the Communist Party maintained towards popular culture and its potential role as an ally in the political struggle.[70] Consumerist aspects of punk and its contradictory relationship with the music and fashion industries are highlighted repeatedly. Furthermore, the criticism of subcultures as a surrogate for political action and a distraction from the 'correct' forms of youth aggregation, which will bring to the advancement of the proletariat, is reiterated throughout the article.

Paradoxically, this type of argument was largely used by the *PCI* and *L'Unità* against the Beat and 1968 protest movements which Bianchi considers as more 'authentic' forms of dissent than punk.

2) **The Italian Music Press and Punk**

The first specialised Italian rock music magazines appeared between the very late sixties and the beginning of the seventies. Before that period, Italian pop/rock criticism was mostly confined to the variety pages of newspapers and to dedicated columns on general lifestyle, politics and sport magazines. The only exemptions were the short-lived *Musica Jazz*, which had started publications in 1945 – and was clearly focused on Jazz music – and *Il Musichiere*, covering the Italian popular music star system for a few years between the late fifties and the early sixties. Another notable pre-seventies Italian music magazine was *Musica & Dischi*, a record industry bulletin, initially solely devoted to classical music, which

[70] An introduction to PCI's approach to the so-called *Questione Giovanile* and to post-war popular culture will be provided in Chapter 4 of the present work.

by the late sixties had started to cautiously include some popular music reviews in its columns. The economic boom of the early sixties, the diffusion of teenage culture and the rise of an Italian pop star system generated a number of teenage oriented magazines like *Ciao Amici* and *Qui Giovani*: these periodicals would mostly talk about celebrity related stories which would often include popular singers and beat groups but the focus was always on gossip and teenage sociality rather than music.

At the beginning of the seventies, the birth of the Italian specialised rock press coincided with two events: on the one hand, the rise to prominence of progressive and jazz rock in the estimation of 'serious' music fans; on the other, the recognition of rock as the main musical soundtrack to the season of student protests which had started in 1968.
The combination of these two elements led to a generation of heavily politicised, predominantly Marxist and mostly male music journalists who would put progressive rock and pop, jazz rock, folk and folk-influenced rock[71] at the centre of their critical preoccupations. As a result, the tone and register of magazines like *Ciao 2001* and especially *Gong* and *Muzak* was often very similar to some of the *Movimento* journals like *Lotta Continua*. For most of 1977 all the new Italian rock magazines largely ignored punk and they reluctantly started writing about it only months after the most cutting-edge political press had already started covering the subject. Even then, the tone was lukewarm, sarcastic and at times openly hostile. An example of the above-mentioned attitude can be found on the pages of *Ciao 2001*. At the end of his review of the 1977 Ramones album *Leave Home*, the journalist feels obliged to write a disclaimer about what he describes as the group's 'ideology'.

> *Finally, we must mention the unmistakable ideology which the group is supporting: studded belts, metallic eagles et similia. The song 'Commando' feature lyrics like: first rule is 'the laws of Germany' […] third rule is 'don't talk to commies'. All these things are putting the whole [punk] case under a sinister light and are definitely a cause for concern* (Ciao 2001, 1977)

[71] Due to its tradition of social comment and political militancy folk was in fact another genre which found large space in the Italian music press of the time.

For the *Ciao 2001* reviewer punk's fascism is not even shrouded in ambiguity: on the contrary, he wants to be sure that the magazine's readership is warned about the 'unmistakable' political leanings of this new music sub-culture.

As it will be demonstrated, this negative attitude towards the ideological nihilism of punk rock is detectable in almost every early report about the phenomenon by the Italian music press. One example is provided by the first significant and encompassing report about the new music subculture, which was attempted by *Popster*, one of the most recent additions to the Italian music press landscape.[72]

Popster covered punk in its tenth issue:[73] the 'punk special' feature attempts to trace a musical lineage of the punk sound with monographies on forerunners such as The MC5, Iggy & The Stooges, Lou Reed. Even the Runaways and the Tubes are listed as possible punk precursors. Nevertheless, in the introduction to the special the article presents the same ideological approach of journals like *l'Unità* or *Lotta Continua*, with no trace of the sympathetic tone of the *Re Nudo* punk feature. In his commentary, writer Beppe Videtti draws a line between what he considers authentic, original US punk and the more commercial and mediated 1977 version of the same sound. The conditions that gave birth to 'original' punk rock lie, according to Videtti, in the economic settlement of the United states during the sixties.

> *The origins of punk must be traced back to the alienation that urban explosion and mass industrialization of sixties have caused [in the USA]. […] America was asking its people to participate for the prosperity of the nation: in exchange for their efforts the people have been given a commodified existence made by Chevrolet cars, television sets, highways, skyscrapers, cosmetics and plastic. […](Videtti, 1977)*

[72] Another important magazine was Il Mucchio Selvaggio, which began its publications in 1977 and whose editorial line was focused on new rock acts such as Bruce Springsteen or Patti Smith and on sixties psychedelic rock as opposed to progressive or jazz rock. Il Mucchio Selvaggio would start covering punk, post punk and new wave extensively only from 1979.

[73] Videtti, B. 'Speciale Punk', *Popster,* N. 10, September 1977

Emphasis is put on the crossdressing practices of many of the punk forerunners, almost as if androgyny had to be justified with a socio/political motivation.

> *The most direct punk ancestors are those who adopted transvestitism as a mockery of petty morals, exhibitionism as a reaction to prohibitions, cursing as a cry of freedom, chaos as an essential phase of total destruction in view of new perspectives.*
> *[…] Transvestitism might express a real human situation (Lou Reed), a well-aimed political satire (Fugs, MC5), or the epitome of the alienated and solitary condition of the individual living on the margins of the metropolis (Iggy & The Stooges). (1977)*

In Videtti's view, early US punk was characterized by an 'authentic' uncommercial approach coming from a sub-proletarian or alienated reality.

> *For these groups, inspiration was spontaneous and their enthusiasm was genuine: there was no real industrial manipulation about them and consequently no international promotion by the music business. […] In the case of these musicians, who were not-professionals for the most part, this outlandish and boisterous form of expression was connected with the frustration which they had to endure in the ghettos, where America hides its undesirable and dangerous citizens. Rock and roll represented the best vehicle to get away from that situation and to scream one's anger out loud. Iggy would bleed onstage, almost in an effort to be believable at all costs, thus shocking purists with the same violence with which America's 'desolation rows' had consumed his own adolescence. This is why Iggy was, more than anybody else, a true punk 'ante litteram': he was an authentic sub-proletarian New York*[74] *punk. (1977)*

According to the author, the new breed of 1977 was a largely fabricated proposition, unlike Iggy and The Stooges' 'authentic' brand of punk. Most importantly, in the eyes of Videtti,

[74] James Osterberg, AKA Iggy Pop, was actually from Ann Arbor (Michigan)

the punks' apparent lack of political focus and obnoxious behaviour was useless if not harmful to the Marxist revolutionary cause.

> *The success of the term punk in 1977 is based on the mere reprisal of these [early US punk] elements. Therefore, these new punk thugs (because they are just thugs) are being inevitably associated to the condition of the young American lumpen-proletarians, thus legitimising their own extremely violent outbursts and politically pointless actions. They would object to this point by saying that music and politics are two different things: if that is so, the punks should explain to us how the situation of the lumpen-proletariat can ever be discussed - or even solved - as an essentially musical matter. Their condition does not give them permission to create havoc at any cost – that should be allowed only in a moment of class consciousness attainment in which not only the chosen few should be allowed to act and take decisions. […](1977)*

As the previous passage shows the punks are not seen as a musical sub-culture but much rather as a political action group. As such they are called out to answer for and justify their political strategy and struggle tactics.
Videtti then reinforces his point with one final accusation: 1977 punk is nothing but a fake capitalist scam and passing trend:

> *In fact, after Ziggy's change of tune the music industry had to create another financial income machine for the benefit of the lovers of all things weird and tough and to please those who say that music and politics should be kept apart. Originality in these cases is not very useful: rehashing some musical and behavioural elements which years ago used to belong to an élite has been enough [for the punks]. Furthermore, the new 'heroes' act with the defiant attitude of the juvenile delinquent, but it is no secret that their ripped jeans are just the product of some clever scissor-work. (1977)*

In the same issue, *Popster* dedicates a brief report to some early examples of Italian punk. In this section, the tone of the report becomes sarcastic and patronising, especially when electro-punk male/female duo Chrisma are mentioned:

> …*and here come thirty-years old Chrisma who claim to have predated punk just because they have been dressing in black for a few years […] I guess that now a lot of Italian punk bands will begin to show up and God only knows the extent of the horrors which we will be forced to listen to. Some clubs […] are already hosting the occasional punk night, but we have not been lucky enough to attend one yet*…(1977)

In a similar way to the *L'Unità* article, the *Popster* special establishes a negative comparison between punk and a previous age of 'authentic' musical rebellion: for the *Unità* writer this 'golden' age is represented by the Italian beat movement, while for Videtti the same authenticity is embodied by recognised punk godfathers Lou Reed, The MC5 and Iggy & The Stooges. On the contrary, 1977 punk is just some '*financial income machine'* created by the music and fashion industry to profit from the crisis of the political counter-culture. It is evident how both the *PCI* official journal and the music press are employing the same rhetoric device to delegitimise punk, both ideologically and musically. Even less authentic are the Italian punks who are dismissed by Videtti for being either band wagon jumpers (Chrisma) or hopelessly devoid of any musical talent. Videtti has not even heard any new Italian punk band yet but he's already convinced that the national scene will only be able to produce musical 'horror'.

3) Punk in Italian Lifestyle, Culture, News, and Youth Magazines

Between the second half of the year 1977 and 1978, punk had become a regular subject all over the entire Italian press. In fact, important generic news, culture and politics magazines such as *Epoca* and the L'*Espresso* both published punk specials. Since their inception, this type of publication intended to target a rising, well-educated Italian middle class readership of secular persuasion. Based on the model of the American lifestyle magazine *Life*, the long-standing weekly *Epoca* was the voice of a new post-war Italian bourgeoisie which was fascinated with the contemporary world and interested in learning about politics, culture science and society. In its July 20, 1977 issue, *Epoca* presented a reportage on London punk

titled 'Her Majesty's Meanies'.[75] The article, signed by Alberto Salani, tried to picture the punk movement against the backdrop of Silver Jubilee England and shows a sympathetic attitude towards the punks, described as victims of a society which is unaware of its own gradual decadence, to the point that the author claims '*Being a teenage punk – and being provocatively proud of it – is an appeal to everyone's conscience, not just some sociologist's research matter*' (Salani, 1977)

The punks are described as *'marginalised youth who don't believe in anything and therefore are making a mockery out of everything'* (1977).

In spite of their aggressive look and vivacious behavior the punks are actually the victims of many episodes of street violence from other pre-existing sub-cultural groups such as the Teddy Boys:

> *The punks […] are victims of violence themselves. Eddie Maelov, Paul Cook, Johnny Rotten are the names of the kids who have been recently stabbed or clubbed by other young kids like them. The ghosts of juvenile battles between the Mods and Rockers are coming around again. In this case, unsettling images of Teddy Boys with chains, razors and brass knuckles come to mind.* (1977)

L'Espresso is a news and politics periodical whose political leanings, especially in the late seventies, were more leftist if compared with *Epoca. L'Espresso* was the voice of Italy's left-wing intellectual middle-class: it was a secular and progressive magazine which refrained from extremism but was firmly in favour of radical leftist reforms in all areas of public life and economy. Its influential cultural pages were an indicator of the opinions of a large share of Italy's more cultured *bourgeoisie*. In October 1977, the magazine came out with a little addendum called *'Pop Rock Punk – The Young Music: History and Mythology of a Revolution.'*[76]

[75] Salani, A. 'I Guitti di Sua Maestà', *Epoca*, n. 1398, July 20, 1977.

[76] V.A. 'Pop Rock Punk – La Musica Giovane: Racconto e Mito di una Rivoluzione' *L'Espresso*, October 1977, *Pop rock punk* special, pp. 15-17

The booklet was supposed to reconstruct the history of rock and roll and its revolutionary mythology from the fifties until the late seventies. Contributor Francesco Russo is given the task to introduce punk to the readers. He does it with a piece bearing the title of *'We Will Be Forced to Hear About This Lot All Winter Long'*,[77] explicitly declaring the magazine's dismissive stance on the subject.

In the first part of the piece, Russo provides an account of the Bill Grundy incident and the ensuing fracas: he states that what could have been the end for the Sex Pistols actually became the basis for their success both in terms of notoriety and economic wealth. He remarks how both Johnny Rotten from the Sex Pistols and Mick Jones from The Clash have now become rich thanks to their record contracts, in spite of their humble origins and rebellious attitude ('*what was once rotten has now become golden*', the author sarcastically remarks).

Punk's relationship to rock and roll is then assessed with a sexual metaphor:

> *If rock and roll intended to reproduce the rhythm of coitus, then punk is channeling sex through violence. A punk song wants to be the musical equivalent of rape, where orgasm is reached through violence.* (Russo, 1977: p. 15)

The author also refers to the subculture's not yet clarified standing within the political landscape.

> *So far, trying to establish punk's political collocation has proven to be extremely hard. The Clash's Joe Strummer claims that the only newspaper he's reading is The Sun and he also adds: 'I know nothing about Marx. All that stuff is boring to me. Who can be interested in all those people when they only seem interested in backstabbing each other? People say that we are a political band because we sing about reality. I have no plans for changing the world though*. (1977: p. 16)

[77] Russo, R. 'Questi Qui Li Sentiremo Tutto l'Inverno' *L'Espresso*, October 1977, *Pop Rock Punk* special

Another typical feature of the Italian press of the seventies was the rapid diffusion of a few short-lived progressive teenage magazines. These periodicals were targeting a new type of readership which had developed their cultural interests during a politically intense decade. Publications like *Doppiovù* and *Corriere della Sera* insert *Boy Magazine* dealt with sensitive issues such as sexuality, school and drugs and were aimed at a socially aware, but not necessarily politically militant, young public.

These magazines were a product of the sociopolitical climate of the *Years of Lead*, but differently from *Re Nudo* or *Il Pane e Le Ro*se in that they were not a direct expression of radical groups or parties. *Boy Magazine* was an insert of the *Corriere della Sera*, one of the most important Italian newspapers: founded in 1876 and published by the Rizzoli group, *Il Corriere della Sera* has always given voice to the interests and opinions of the Northern Italian urban middle class. Its teenage oriented monthly insert *Boy* tried to adopt an open and unprejudiced editorial line which was supposed to reflect the spirit of late-seventies Italian youth. Nevertheless, *Boy*'s punk special was characterised by a reproachful and moralising approach, accompanied with voyeuristic overtones. The article - titled 'Punk: The Smelly Protest'[78] – talked about how punk had been '*smuggled as the most violent expression of alternative culture*' (Cantaroni, 1977: pp. 10-15). Nevertheless, it had already run its course because '*chains, leashes, safety pins through noses are no longer capable of hiding the emptiness of a non-existing ideology'* (1977: pp. 10-15). The punks are being *'manipulated by a clever exploitation campaign, a rich record industry and an anti-fashion based on bad taste'* (1977: pp. 10-15). One more time, the theme of punk as a record industry manipulation is reiterated on the *Boy Magazine* article, in the same way as it had appeared on the *Unità*, *Popster* and *Espresso* punk features. Once again punk is dismissed as being ideologically inconsistent as it was in all the above-mentioned articles.

On the other hand, *The Doppiovù* special is offering a different perspective on punk. *Doppiovù* was a monthly magazine published by the powerful *Mondadori* group, one of the most important editorial houses in Italy. The magazine was covering cinema, literature and music too. In its December 1977 issue *Doppiovù* ran an extensive punk feature titled *'Punk! Punk! Punching Life in The Face':* the *Doppiovù* feature*,* other than providing a general

[78] Cantaroni, N., 'Punk Una Protesta Che Puzza'. *BOY Magazine* n.44 in *Corriere della Sera*, October 1977, pp. 10-15.

overview on punk in the UK and the USA, presents one of the earliest reports on Italian punk, albeit mostly focused on the Milan scene.[79] Furthermore, the voice of Italian punks is heard for the first time on the Italian press. In fact, during the course of the report several teenage *Milanese* punks hanging around the *Fiorucci*[80] store in *Via Torino*[81] are asked several questions about their new punk identity and style. It must be said that all the interviewees are part of the so-called *Fiorucci* punk scene and represented only one of the several sides of Milanese punk, which will be examined in the ninth chapter of the present work. Nevertheless, by interviewing these punks, *Doppiovù* is at least acknowledging their voice and their existence in a way that was never attempted before by the Italian press.

The first question that the magazine is trying to answer is a very common concern for the Italian press: is punk a fascist subculture?

The authors initially stress how some punks are gathering in *San Babila*, at the time a predominantly right-wing area of Milan. This, they remark, is *'just another contradictory signal from a contradictory phenomenon like punk'.*[82] They then ask 14 years old punk girl Teresa about her political leanings. The only answer they get is '*I'm not interested in politics, it only gets you into trouble'.*[83]Another interviewee, called *Incubo* (Nightmare) declares:

> *I'm a punk because punk it annoys people on the left and on the right. Feeling as bad as I do, it would be absolutely nonsensical to hang around dressed like a radical activist and pretending that everything is alright with me.*

All the interviewees are complaining about the standardisation and the commodification of the punk look. They are also annoyed by the fact that in order to avoid exploitation by the fashion industry some of them felt the need to stop wearing their punk garments. Some of them are annoyed by the 'fake' punks who don't have the courage to inflict pain on

[79] Cesoni, D. and Harari, G. 'Punk! Punk! Pugni in faccia alla vita'*, Doppiovu'*, n. 15, December 1977, pp. 16-22.

[80] Italian couturier which had launched a punk-styled collection.

[81] A central Milanese street which in the article is described as 'Milan's King's Road'.

[82] All quotations in the text are from Cesoni and Harari, 1977: pp 15-22, until noted otherwise.

[83] *Ibid.*

themselves but want to wear the look anyway. Always according to Nella: '[…] *The true punks are not those who are hanging around with fake safety pins and don't even pierce their lips. That is not true masochism!'*

15 year old Marina remarks: '*[…] We run around in these clothes because shocking people is great fun: Italians are such conformists!'*
Mario, 22 years old, says: '*[…] I like punk even though I don't belong to any group or movement and that includes politics.'*
While the ideological belonging side of the *Fiorucci* punks is rapidly dealt with, the sexual politics of the subculture are investigated with much more detail by the *Doppiovù* special. This is actually more revelatory of the relationship between punks and the cultural influence of the *Movimento*. When questioned about sexism in punk *Incubo* replies as follows:

> *Would you rather have some male, it doesn't matter if he's bourgeois, proletarian or even a communist, who is mistreating his female partner – or even beating her up – while publicly claiming that he loves and respects her, or the punks who may be singing stuff like 'I'm gonna slap you' or 'I'm biting you on the back' but they are clearly never going to do that in reality? On the contrary, punk girls are having their say and they are free to reply with the same attitude saying stuff like 'watch out because I can beat you up too, I quite like that actually!'*

Another young punk illustrates the sexual politics in the scene:

> *Relationships among us are very fluid. If some of us are forming couples is just because we want to, because we like to be friends. We don't care at all about feelings. If one member of a given couple wants to see another boy or girl, it's no drama, differently from how it used to be in the past […] We like gay people very much, they are friendly and fun to hang out with.*

Elaborating on the young punks' reply the authors add that these punks are part of a larger Milanese social scene which is redefining gender roles and sexual attitudes:

> *The real new element of this new social phenomenon […], of which punk rock is a part of, lies in the management of relationships. There is a strong stand against stiff gender roles and against the violent atmosphere you can feel in the air these days. The males, for instance, are refusing the role of the bully, of the macho, in order to embrace a more fluid almost gay, gender identity. Homosexuality is not seen as a negative thing at all. There is a form of spontaneous consciousness that steers away from norms which are imposing separate roles for the sexes and which often lead to violence in the relationships between men and women.*

According to the authors the punks are getting together in groups to react against loneliness and marginalisation. All the punks who are interviewed by *Doppiovù* are sharing stories of loneliness, boredom and frustration which sometimes are leading to self-harm practices. In this context, punk represents a way of '*punching life in the face*', as the title of the article suggests.

With their obnoxious appearance and their noisy music, these early punks were the embodiment of the same climate of violence that post-industrial *Anni di Piombo* Italy was forcing upon them. At the same time, punk was a way of exorcising the political, social and sexual polarisation of Italian society in that specific historical phase. By directing violence unto their own bodies, instead of attacking their peers, the punks were implicitly refusing the entrenchment of Italian society which pushed so many young people to hurt and often kill each other for political reasons.[84] At the same time, with their self-harm practices and their display of contradictory ideological iconography, they were claiming to be the end product of a long and grueling historical period marked by socio-political divisions and physical violence. In almost every Italian press feature on punk the theme of punk's use of S&M wear and the rampant androgyny of the scene were described with a tone that mixed moral condemnation, derision and voyeuristic lust. The *Doppiovù* article is particularly interesting because it finally let the punks speak about their notorious sexual life. The fluid

[84] As it twill be demonstrated in the following chapters, due to their provocative look and their rejection of a clear-cut political affiliation, early italian punks often became the target of violence and abuse from both left wing and right wing activists.

approach to gender and sexuality which the punks are claiming for themselves was caught between two different types of heteronormativity in Italy. On one side, there was the traditional Italian Catholic morality; on the other side, there was the *Movimento* cultural area with its mostly unspoken and largely unquestioned heteronormative behavioural codes. This attitude within the Movement would later be lamented by members of the Bolognese punk scene as contributions to the book *'Lumi di Punk'* (Philopat, 2006) and interviews conducted by the author of the present work have confirmed (Carroli, 2017).Furthermore, the refusal by many punk subjectivities to stick to gender roles was another element which emerges from the *Doppiovù* interviews to young scene members from both the male and female sex. As it shows from the *Doppiovù* interviews, for some boys, punk's androgyny was a way to elude the predominant male role models proposed by Italian society, which declined two forms of machismo: one which was embodied by the traditional Italian patriarchal model and one which was inherent in the *Movimento's* cult for the Communist street fighter. Furthermore, it must be stressed that most of the *Doppiovù* punk interviewees are females. Some Italian girls, who were presented with an even shorter set of options than the boys, might have seen punk as a chance to put as much distance as possible between them and the suffocating traditional female roles Italian society: after all, '*Italians are such conformists*'

- **Conclusions**

As it has emerged from the analysis of the coverage of punk rock by the Italian press, two main approaches towards the subject are predominant.

A political newspaper like *L'Unità*, a lifestyle/politics weekly like L'*Espresso*, a music journal like *Popster* and a teenage oriented magazine like *Boy* are examples of a judgmental, at times disdainful, approach to punk. These publications were criticising punk on the basis of its perceived musical, political, economic and sexual contradictions and shortcomings. Notably, none of the reports from the above-mentioned magazines included the voices of punk musicians or punk fans, with the exception of quotations taken from other printed or mediated sources.

This critical approach is running through all the three categories in which the Italian print press has been divided for the purposes of this research.

The reports by alternative political journal *Re Nudo*, news magazine *Epoca* and teenage - oriented monthly *Doppiovù* all share a sympathetic approach towards the members of the subculture and a desire to understand the social situations behind punk. Criticism is often aimed at these social conditions rather than at the punks, even if appreciation for the music and dress code of the subculture is never openly shown or declared. Furthermore, the *Re Nudo* and *Doppiovù* specials both feature interviews with punk musicians and scene members, showing an interest for the personal stories of the members of this subculture that cannot be found in other printed press reports.

It must be remarked how in the music magazine category this sympathetic approach is never detectable. This is an indication of how any possible understanding of punk by the Italian press could only be of social and political nature: in most cases the musical side of punk was quickly dismissed as primitive, repetitive noise that only underlined the urban alienation of which the punk subculture was a sub-product.

This does not mean that a socio-political judgement was always appreciative – on the contrary – but at least within that perspective there was space for the occasional understanding of punk as a subcultural tribe, as the *Re Nudo* report has shown, or of the punks as subjectivities as they were presented by *Doppiovù*. Invariably, the socio-political approach to the analysis of punk was firmly based on Italian reality: hence the association between the punk image and the look of the Italian fascist street fighters who would often wear black leather, short hair, combat boots and sunglasses too. Beppe Videtti (*Popster*)

writes about the punks' unequivocally '*Nazi faces*' in his Popster article and the *Ciao 2001* reviewer refers to the *'unmistakable (fascist) ideology'* of the Ramones, on the basis of their leather jacket and studded belt look. As it will be demonstrated in the subchapters dedicated to the Milanese and Roman scene, this type of misunderstanding about punk would often result in open hostility and, in some cases, in episodes of physical aggression towards punks by members of the *Movimento*.

Besides *Doppiovù* and *Boy Magazine,* other teenage oriented magazines such as *Il Monello*, *Il Corriere dei Ragazzi, Il Guerin Sportivo*[85]*,* and *Intrepido* covered the subject of punk between 1977 and 1978.

Even children's publications such as the Walt Disney franchise *Topolino*[86] published a 'guide to punk'.

Erotic magazines like *Playmen*[87] as well as the Italian edition of *Playboy* covered punk, with references to its display of fetish and S&M garments and to its disinhibited sexual politics. In these cases, the tone of the articles was sexually and politically exploitative. Furthermore, the second *Playmen*[88] punk special was essentially an advertisement for *Fiorucci's* punk clothing line. Nevertheless, both magazines made abundant references to punk's social background and political dynamics: in *Anni di Piombo* Italy not even men's erotic magazines could escape the need to identify punk in socio-political terms. As Falcon - the imaginary British friend of the *Re Nudo* reporter - would have put it, Italians *'always want an answer to everything through political analysis' (Re Nudo, 1977).*

[85] Gherardi, G. and Romagnoli, L., 'Punk Mania', *Il Guerin Sportivo*, issue 1, January 1978, pp. 5-16

[86] *Topolino* is the Italian name of Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse character. It is also the title of a Walt Disney weekly comic book for children.

[87] Marchetti, S. 'I terroristi del Punk', *Playmen*, September 1977, pp. 20-24

[88] Rocchi, R. 'Heil Punk!', *Playmen*, November 1977, pp. 18-20

Chapter VI

Non Succedeva Da Cinque Secoli:[89] The *Movimento del '77* and the First Wave of Bolognese Punk

[89] Publicity slogan for the 1979 Bologna Rock festival that can be loosely translated as *'nothing like this has happened since five centuries ago'*.

- **Introduction**

Andate a lavorare, teppisti![90]

The present chapter is focused on the Bolognese new wave and punk rock scenes between the years 1977 and 1980. The main features and characteristics of early punk in Bologna will be presented, discussed and analyzed. For most part, this chapter will follow the first steps the two most successful Bolognese 'new rock' bands, Gaznevada and Skiantos. The development of the first punk inspired independent labels, clubs and festivals on the local scene will be presented and analysed as well. As it has been argued in the introduction of this research work, Bologna enjoyed a very unique status in the Italian socio-political panorama. The city also had a long history as a music community, having produced some of the most successful Italian music acts of the fifties and sixties. Furthermore, Bologna was at the forefront of the so-called 'Creative Wing' (*Ala Creativa)* of the *Movimento del 77.*[91] However, the exhilarating momentum of this new approach to the *Movimento* struggles which Bologna was spearheading came to an abrupt halt on 11 March 1977: during a confrontation between two opposing political groups which had turned into a street riot, the Carabinieri shot and killed 25-year old student Francesco Lorusso, a member of *Lotta Continua.* As a reaction, the student population and local extra parliamentary activists erupted in a two-days revolt which took over the entire city centre. The city's police forces were unable to contain the riots: to scare off the activists and stop the upsurge, Communist major Renato Zangheri allowed the intervention of the Italian Army sent by the Minister of Internal Affairs Francesco Cossiga. For the first time since the end of the Second World War, military tanks entered and occupied the centre of Bologna. These events left a profound mark on the city's public opinion and exacerbated the rift between the PCI and the extra-parliamentary students and activists: the tone of the Bolognese take on the *Movimento* became much angrier and more bitter than before. Early narratives about the *Riflusso* started to circulate among the activists. In general the social and political climate in the city became grim and tense.

[90] "Get yourself a job, you punks!": quoted from the song 'Io Sono un Autonomo', Skiantos (1978), *Mono Tono,* [LP] Italy, Cramps Records

By the end of the 1970s, a strong desire for getting out of the dramatic polarisation which had followed the 1977 riots started to circulate even among some *Movimento* members. However, even after March 1977 facts, the *Movimento* was still a strong cultural influence in Bologna and in the rest of Italy too.

This is why particular attention will be devoted to the relationship between the 1977 Movement and punk in the present work: even in the so-called *Riflusso* phase, the cultural politics of the *Movimento* have been one of the decisive elements for the fortunes of this specific subculture and music genre, both at local and national level.

Structure

This chapter is organised as follows. The first section is dedicated to the formation and transition out of the ranks of the *Movimento del 77* of Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano/Gaznevada, one of the most prominent punk bands in Bologna. The central part of the chapter is focused on the beginnings of the earliest punk inspired music industries in Bologna. The short-lived experience of Punkreas*,* one of the first Italian punk venues, located in Bologna's city centre, will be examined. There will be a focus on the first steps of the Bolognese independent music label scene, which was coming out of the ranks of the *Movimento*: the case of Harpo's Bazaar*,* a multimedia collective which will soon reinvent itself as one of the first Italian punk-inspired independent record labels will be introduced and analyzed. Harpo's Bazaar enabled the debut of Bolognese band Skiantos with their peculiar take on rock which spawned the so-called *Rock Demenziale* ('Nonsense Rock') subgenre: connections between *Rock Demenziale* and punk rock will be analysed. Finally, the 1979 *Bologna Rock* festival, which showcased most of the main Bolognese 'new rock' bands, will be the subject of the last section of the chapter.

Main Arguments

Throughout the present section of this research work, it will be demonstrated how Bologna was particularly responsive to punk mainly because of the peculiar features of the local protest movement and music scene. This chapter will also argue that, in its most significant expressions, the Bolognese take on punk can be explained as an expression of weariness and disillusionment due to the stalemate situation of the *1977 Movement* especially after the events of March 1977 with their sombre aftermath. Ultimately, early Bolognese punk

can be seen as a reaction to the cultural habits of the Italian Marxist left, which had been dominating radical Italian youth culture since 1968/1969. As it will be argued, this reaction was coming from within the Movement itself. Specifically, early Bolognese punk emerged from the *Ala Creativa*, the artistically minded branch of the protest front which represented Bologna's trademark contribution to the *Movimento del 77*.

Traumfabrik

The intimate connection between the Bolognese Movement and punk is confirmed by the fact that the first nucleus of what was going to become Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano and eventually Gaznevada came together within the walls of the Traumfabrik arts lab. The flat, located in the very central *Via Clavature*, was first broken into and occupied in 1976, during a Movement march which passed through the city's historical centre. Traumfabrik was initially conceived as a housing facility and arts laboratory by and for comic artist Filippo Scozzari with a restricted group of cooperators. The apartment quickly turned into an open creative hub and a gathering place for some of the artists who belonged to *Creative Wing*. Comic artist Andrea Pazienza was one of Traumfabrik's most promising young talents. With Tanino Liberatore and Scozzari himself, Pazienza was rapidly becoming one of the main names of Italy's new wave of comic art. Pioneering video art group Grabinsky soon made Traumfabrik their home as well.[92] Other regulars of the *Via Clavature* flat were a loose group of comic artists and musicians who had grouped around the figure of Giampiero Huber, one of Traumfabrik earliest occupants. Ciro Pagano, Giorgio Lavagna, Sandro Raffini, Marco Dondini, Paolo Grandi and Gianluca Galliani, early members of Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano, all shared ambitions in the field of visual arts but one of their common passions was music.

In line with their fondness for everything that was contemporary, camp and avant-garde, the young Traumfabrik artists started developing a specific interest for some of the cutting-edge rock/pop music which was coming from the USA and the UK. Their musical preferences soon put a distance between them and the wider tastes of the 1977 Movement, which were expressed and influenced by the playlist of Radio Alice, the main

[92] For further information on Traumfabrik and the Bolognese comic art scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s see: Scozzari (1996)

radio station for the local *Movimento*. For its musical selections, Radio Alice predominantly focused on classic rock, progressive and various styles of folk music and jazz. In Giorgio Lavagna's recollection:

> *Very soon the epicentre of Traumfabrik shifted from Filippo's drawing board to the turntable placed next to the central sofa. That turntable initially played a compact version of Radio Alice's playlist (Rolling Stones, Fela Kuti, Bob Dylan, Eric Burdon, Italian cantautori…), but there was one record which was played most often and became the true soundtrack of that spring. It was an album which had been released a few years before, to be honest, but the backward Italian musical culture was beginning to get it only in 1976: it was Here Come the Warm Jets by Brian Eno. It is weird to think how a 1973 record could still sound so futuristic in 1976 […]. At the time the music scene in Bologna was still dominated by cantautori, political folklore songbooks and great doses of Chilean music. But this would soon be coming to an end, at least for us. (Lavagna, 2007)*

Lavagna remembers having very strong feelings towards the music which was popular within the *Movimento* circle: '*I deeply hated everything that constituted musical culture of the Movimento. I was dreaming of a musical scene like the ones in New York or London.'*[93] Very soon, Giorgio Lavagna became obsessed with one album whose cover he had seen at the new born Disco D'oro[94] record shop.

> *My attention was caught by this black and white cover depicting four weird but unassuming looking guys standing with their backs against a wall. They all wore ripped blue jeans and I've always loved denim and blue jeans so I bought the album on that basis. The title on the cover was simply 'Ramones'. I brought the record home and played it immediately. At first, I was shocked by the fact that the songs on the*

[93] Giorgio Lavagna quoted in Oderso Rubini and Andrea Tinti, *Non Disperdetevi. 1977-1982 San Francisco, New York, Bologna. Le Città Libere del Mondo,* (Roma: Arcana Editrice, 2003), p. 204.

[94] The *Disco D'oro* record shop, opened for business in 1976, was one of the first new wave and punk retailers in Bologna. The steps to the left of the shops' entrance soon became one of the first meeting places for the Bolognese punks.

first side all seemed to sound alike. I flipped the record to play the second side and to, my surprise, the songs on the B-side of the album all sounded the same as well! I couldn't understand if it was a joke or else. That night I went to bed still dumbfounded by what I had been listening to. I even considered taking the record back to the shop in the morning. When I woke up the next day I played it again and, yes, actually all songs did sound exactly the same! This time though I found the whole record exciting and exhilarating. That same repetitiveness that puzzled me on first listen, now seemed incredibly interesting and stimulating. On the next morning, instead of bringing the record back to Disco D'oro, I decided to play The Ramones on my radio show. [95]

Blitzkrieg Bop over the Bologna Airwaves

Between the end of 1976 and the beginning of 1977, Giorgio Lavagna hosted a music show on Radio Alice. In an effort aimed at refreshing the radio's musical politics, Lavagna's playlists would already feature artists who would influence punk music like David Bowie, Roxy Music, Sparks, The New York Dolls, Lou Reed and Patti Smith. Nevertheless, when he finally decided to play his Ramones album, Lavagna caused an unprecedented reaction from his audience. In fact, as the Ramones album played, Radio Alice received a number of angry calls from various listeners: most of the complaints mentioned the obnoxiousness of the music, its aggressive nature and its apparent lack of technical values in terms of musicianship. Lavagna and Radio Alice were even called 'Fascists' by some audience members. Lavagna has claimed that, at that moment, he was still unaware that the music he was playing had already been labeled as punk. In Lavagna's estimation, the same can be said about most of the outraged Radio Alice listeners (Lavagna, 2018)

Lavagna does not remember the exact date of this broadcast and it was not possible to know with certainty if the Ramones had already been played on the Bolognese radio waves. Nevertheless, this incident proves how the relationship between the *Movimento* and the new punk sound was a complex affair since the very beginning.

In the Traumfabrik milieu the compressed sound of the Ramones was received with enthusiasm and excitement. Here is what Lavagna has to say about the change in musical

[95] Giorgio Lavagna, interview with author, 31.01.2018, from now on quoted as Lavagna (2018) in the present text.

taste of the *Via Clavature 20* regulars: *[…] the release of the first Ramones album erased the past completely, totally renewing the musical sphere which described our life at Traumfabrik. Ramones, Ultravox, Suicide became the new music, the soundtrack of a new way of seeing the world* (Lavagna, 2018).

According to another Traumfabrik occupant, Gianluca Galliani, other important influences on the soon-to-become members of Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano were Captain Beefheart, The Velvet Underground, Nico's solo output and, crucially, the debut album by The Damned. Stimulated by the new wave and punk sounds that they were discovering at such a fast pace Lavagna, Pagano, Raffini, Dondini, Grandi, Galliani and Huber (the latter positioning itself as an external 'musical consultant'), began to devote more and more time to music making. In fact, only a few of them had previously received musical training of some form but the primitivism of punk and their own avant-garde ideas justified their elemental and chaotic approach to sound.

In 1977, Lavagna, Galliani and other members of the still embryonic Traumfabrik musical collective embarked on repeated journeys to the UK with the specific intent of gathering information about the punk scene (Rubini, 2009). In the UK, Galliani discovered bands such as the Buzzcocks, 999, Sham 69, T. Rex and New York Dolls. He also attended shows by The Stranglers, Ultravox!, XTC and the Sex Pistols. By his return to Bologna, he had already turned into a punk rocker:

> *When I returned to Bologna, at the end of the summer of 1977, I sent my formerly beloved ELP, Yes, Genesis, Gentle Giant, Soft Machine and […] Led Zeppelin straight to hell. The difference between our ripped and torn generation and their ivory tower billionaire status was now clear to me.* (Galliani, quoted by Rubini, 2009. p. 41)

According to Galliani, the tragic events of March 1977 and their aftermath, had also changed the climate of the city and had brought its lively cultural and political scene to a standstill (Galliani in Rubini, 2009, p. 44). When the *Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione* was announced for late September 1977, Galliani and his cohorts felt like they needed to send out a message to the over-reflective, hazy and tired *Movimento* audience. The Traumfabrik collective decided to call their project musical collective Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano (Urban Scream Centre). The band name clearly highlights how these new

creative musicians were still divided between their *Movimento* roots and their new punk identity. *Urlo*[96] was a reference to beat poet Allen Ginsberg, an inspirational voice for the Italian hippie generation and a special guest of some *Movimento* events. *Centro* (meaning 'Centre' in Italian) was stressing the collectivist nature of the ensemble, so typical of many *Movimento* projects. *Metropolitano* was a nod to the *Indiani Metropolitani*[97] groups as well as to a futuristic perception of the metropolitan landscape which projected a medium-sized city Bologna over a backdrop of urban alienation. Despite their primitive musicianship, Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano managed to write their first self-penned song. It was a fast-paced rock and roll number inspired by the Ramones[98] called *Mamma Dammi La Benza!* ('Give me Gasoline, Mom!'). Prompted by their friends at the Humpty Dumpty collective[99], the band recorded the song at Bologna's Fonoprint studios, just in time for its inclusion in the first *Sarabanda* tape compilation. The tape was a cut-up of songs, political discussions, readings, musical improvisations, assembly speeches, audio from marches and clashes with the police, Radio Alice open mike debates[100] and other assorted moments of *Movimento* life. Humpty Dumpty was going to distribute the tape during the proceedings of the *Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione.*

[96] *Urlo!* was the Italian title of Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl*

[97] *Indiani Metropolitani* ('Metropolitan Indians') were a branch of the *Ala Creativa* of 1977 Movement.

[98] Audio track of *Mamma Dammi la Benza* by Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihyrKTRFFiA (last access by author April 20, 2018)

[99] *Humpty Dumpty* was a production and distribution center of audio documents of the *Federazione delle Radio Emittenti Democratiche* (Federation of Radio and Democratic Broadcasters), an association of independent radical leftist radios whose acronym was *FRED*. Y dumptyty Dumpty was based in Bologna in a small apartment in the University area. See Chapter 4 of this dissertation for an extended account on Humpty Dumpty and *FRED*.

[100] The tape also included the dramatic audio recording of the March 1977 police blitz which resulted in the forced closure of *Radio Alice*.

From Repression to Expression

On September 25, 1977, right before the end of one of the main musical events connected to the *Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione*, Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano took to a stage which had been built in Bologna's *Piazza dell'Unità.* Centro D'urlo Metropolitano were not even supposed to be performing that evening: they just jumped on stage unannounced, after a brief confrontation with the organisers. Sporting an approximation of the punk look made of sunglasses, chemical lab overalls, leather jackets and studded belts, they launched into the only song they could play, which was their own composition *Mamma Dammi La Benza*. The pace of the performance was frenzied and the sound hard and strident (Rubini, 2009). The lyrics were making clear references to drug addiction and to an outspoken urge to cause mayhem:

Mamma dammi la benza
Non posso farne più senza
Ne sento già la mancanza
Esiste la dipendenza

Which can be translated as:

Give me gasoline, Mom
I can't go on without it anymore
I'm already missing it
Addiction is a reality

The crowd's reaction to the unexpected performance was mixed: some seemed to enjoy the energy of the music and the band's defiant attitude, some were bemused by the proceedings, other punters were dumbfounded and shocked. As soon as they finished playing, Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano addressed the audience with insults, taunting them for their acquiescent and passive attitude. When the band started throwing paper balls into the crowd, some members of the public finally responded to their provocations and various objects were hurled at the stage. Chants of "*Fascists!"* were directed at the band and they were booed as they were leaving the stage. Furthermore, some of the event organizers were offended by the performance and by the behavior of the band: as a consequence, arguments ensued, both on and behind the stage. Always according to Giorgio Lavagna, Centro D'urlo Metropolitano were deliberately trying to cause a reaction from the *Movimento* that day. In Gianluca Galliani's recollection, during the last march of the

Convegno Nazionale sulla Depressione, Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano were described as Nazis, as nihilist agent provocateurs and as homosexuals by some annoyed *Movimento* members.[101] Nevertheless, the band had just delivered the very first self-conscious punk performance which had enjoyed exposure on the Italian musical and political scene.

From *Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano* to Gaznevada

At the beginning of 1978, after some line-up changes and during a further trip to London, Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano decided to change their name as, according to Lavagna, *'Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano sounded too much like the Movimento'* (Lavagna, 2017). They would now be called Gaznevada, after a 1935 short story by Raymond Chandler called *Nevada Gas*. In a typical process of re-birth through naming described by Dave Laing in his book *One Chord Wonders* (1985, pp. 55-68) each member adopted punk nicknames such as Andy Droid, Robert Squibb, Sandy Banana, Bat Matic, Nico Gamma, Johnny Tramonta. In the names that they had chosen there are detectable references to dehumanization through technology (Andy Droid) or bureaucracy (Nico Gamma) and consumerist alienation (Robert Squibb and Bat Matic). After their name change, the band immediately embarked on a project that would delve into their musical and conceptual obsession with the Ramones: Gaznevada were going to play the entire Ramones catalogue on three special performances announced as *Gaznevada Sing Ramones.* Lavagna remembers: '*as soon as we had learned all the songs of the first three albums and we were getting ready for the performance, the Ramones released their fourth album, Road to Ruin!'* (Lavagna, 2018). Undeterred, the band managed to carry out their encyclopedic self-appointed task: they learned the new songs as well and played the full performance for two nights and one afternoon (*ibid*). The performances took place at Punkreas, the first self-proclaimed punk venue in Bologna.

[101] A full account of the *Piazza dell'Unità* events – provided by Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano member Gianluca Galliani - can be found in Rubini, O. (Ed.) (2009) *Gaznevada* (Milano: Shake Edizioni Underground) pp. 37-41.

Punkreas

The short-lived experience of Punkreas *(*or *Pancreas)*[102] is another example of the relationship between the *Movimento* and the first manifestations of punk rock in Bologna. In the words of Laura Carroli, drummer for Bologna's Anarcho-punk band Raf Punk and Punkreas regular:

> *Punkreas was definitely an element of transition between the Movimento and punk. It was run by a loose collective of former Movimento people who seemed to have understood punk, or at least the New York take of it which was artsy, avant-garde but also kind of decadent. In fact, among the punters and the regulars there, heroin consumption was not uncommon at all.*[103]

Punkreas was located in the central *Via De' Grifoni*, in a basement which had previously hosted an Anarchist collective called *La Talpa*. Towards the end of 1978 La Talpa was taken over by a cooperative formed by Walter Mameli, from the Grabinsky video art collective, and by two former Humpty Dumpty members: Nino Iorfino and Luigi Ghermandi. The activity of Punkreas as a rock venue began in November 1978, as the new managers wanted to focus on live music. The club had a very free policy and the bands were free to book their own shows. Very soon, Punkreas became the main venue for the Bolognese 'new rock' scene. Over the course of its short existence, the venue hosted an average of 5 shows per week, including very early appearances by local punk bands such as Skiantos, Luti Chroma, Windopen, Gaznevada and many others. Nevertheless, the club immediately fell under the eye of the police and anti-drugs and anti-noise raids became very frequent. Furthermore, Punkreas had no official license for live music, no SIAE[104] registration and, crucially, it did

[102] Both spellings can be found in posters, flyers and announcements from those times.

[103] Laura Carroli interview with author 20.10.2017 from now on quoted as Carroli, 2017 in the present text

[104] *Società Italiana Autori ed Editori*: governing body for intellectual property, mechanical and performing rights collection in Italy. Any type of public musical activity in Italy must be declared to SIAE prior to the event by the organizers: a permit must be issued by SIAE and a tax must be paid. SIAE, which is a half-public/half private organisation, can enforce fine and payments through the *Guardia di Finanza*, the financial investigation branch of the Italian army.

not belong, or wished to belong, to any political party youth organization such as ARCI[105], which could offer bureaucratic assistance to affiliated venues. As a consequence, warnings, fines and cease and desist orders started to hit Punkreas regularly. The situation quickly became unbearable for Mameli, Iorfino and Ghermandi who had also begun cultivating differences about the future of the club. As a result, Punkreas closed by early March 1979, after only 4 months of existence. (Rubini, 2012, pp. 374-375). Nevertheless, the short-lived Punkreas experience highlighted the necessity for the new punk scene to have spaces where they could learn how to perform in public and in which they could socialize and establish internal connections. Despite its above-mentioned problems, Punkreas briefly provided that kind of safe space. It only lasted four months but in the life-span of an underground music scene, 16 weeks can still be a decisive portion of time. Furthermore, the Punkreas case confirmed the existence of a growing tendency within the *Movimento* members, which was to steer away from political projects in order to focus on music, art and performance instead.

Harpo's Bazaar

In 1977, Oderso Rubini was attending an electronic music course held at Bologna's *Conservatorio Musicale.*[106] The *Conservatorio* is located at the heart of the university area: during the March 77 riots Rubini, a *Movimento* sympathiser and political activist himself, had witnessed all the tension and the violence unfold right before his eyes. According to his recollections, it was in the aftermath of those shocking events that he decided to channel his radical ideas through art and communication, rather than be involved in further direct political action. Once his course was finished, he decided to set up a minimal recording studio, together with his friend and fellow course attendee Carlo Cialdo Capelli. During the Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione they noticed a group of students who were shooting a film diary of the Convegno. The students all belonged to an arts and politics collective called Harpo's Bazaar. Rubini and Capelli befriended the students and, at the beginning of 1978, they both joined Harpo's Bazaar with the intention of working on sound, film, performance and music. In Rubini's words: *'our main aim was not to end up with a*

[105] Founded in 1957, the *Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana (ARCI*) is the leisure and culture division of the Italian Communist Party.

[106] Civic music school.

regular job'.[107] Due to his love for rock and for experimental sounds, Rubini immediately began screening the Bolognese scene, looking for new acts who wanted to record and release their own music.

Skiantos

The embryonic line-up of Skiantos[108] first met in 1972 in the basement of Roberto 'Freak' Antoni's house. According to Antoni, who was a Dams student and a *Movimento* activist, *'[at the time] we did not have any specific content to sing about: we just sang dirty songs"* (Antoni quoted in Rubini, 2012, p. 128). Initially they called themselves Freak Antoni e la Demenza Precoce[109] but they soon changed their name to Skiantos. By 1977, Skiantos had already amassed a full repertoire, almost exclusively made of sarcastic lyric sheets, rather than fully structured songs. In fact, no one amongst them had the basic musical abilities to perform yet. They all shared a love for blues-based hard rock music and a strong dislike for disco music and for the singer songwriters of their generation. As Antoni explained in a 2003 interview with Italian journalist Federico Guglielmi:

> *The musical situation of the period was polarized and somehow constipated between disco/dance on one side and the more or less politically engaged singers/songwriters on the other. In the middle there was rock which had become very anemic and inward looking with all its stereotypes. Both glam and progressive were quite boring too. They both conveyed a baroque version of rock which we did not like at all.* (Antoni, 2018)

When asked about what kind of music they had been listening to up to that point, Antoni did not mention the same avant-garde influences that a band like Centro d'Urlo Metropolitano/Gaznevada liked to wear on their collective sleeve:

[107] Oderso Rubini, interview with author 16.10.2017 from now on quoted as 'Rubini, 2017' in the present text

[108] Skiantos is a pun on the word *Schianto*, which means 'crash' in Italian. It can also mean 'extremely handsome' in urban slang.

[109] *Freak Antoni and the Juvenile Dementia.*

> *I particularly liked rock with clear blues and rock'n'roll roots, rather than progressive. Later, I discovered fifties rock and roll [...] Rock-blues and especially Jimi Hendrix were some of the big influences for me. Our foundations are the masters of rock. Fabio Testoni, one of our historical guitarists, liked the Stones very much. I am more of a Beatles person. As you can see, […] the love for rock-blues was a common trait for each one of us.*[110]

With regard to their individual histories, both Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano and Skiantos had their roots in the *Ala Creativa* of the *Movimento*. Differently from Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano though, Skiantos did not want to break away from it:

> *Skiantos were the children of the so-called creative wing of the student movement. There was a split in '77: on one side you had the creative wing […] while on the other you would find the hard, irreducible fans of armed struggle […] Skiantos were firmly located in the creative side of the Movimento. We were moving away from schematic ideological politics in order to attain a brand-new language which was articulated through satire, sarcasm and irony.*[111]

Always according to Antoni, their ironic and surrealistic approach was what set them apart from what was happening in the UK and USA punk scenes.

> *We have always listened to many rock and pop records, and so we had heard about these 'kindred spirits' in the UK and in the US. We learned that there were some who had embarked on a path which was similar to ours. Obviously, we have always stayed true to our particular trait, which is irony, and this is what makes us true children of the 1977 student movement.*[112]

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[110] *ibid.*

[111] Freak Antoni interview on https://sentireascoltare.com/articoli/skiantos-freak-antoni-monografia-pt-1/ last access 04.01.2018

[112] Freak Antoni interview on https://lultimathule.wordpress.com/2013/11/18/skiantos/ last access 04.01.2018

Inascoltable

Antoni and other Skiantos members were in attendance when Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano played their one-song show in *Piazza dell'Unità*. In Oderso Rubini's opinion '*The idea of forming a band along those surreal and demented lines had been there for some time already, but the influence of that performance on Freak and his cohorts is undeniable. That show [by Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano] gave them the courage to pursue their vision and to pull out all the stops in front of them*' (Rubini, 2017).

In November 1977, Skiantos entered a Bologna recording studio, which was run by expert sound engineer and Harpo's Bazaar member Gianni Gitti. The band turned up with five singers, four guitar players and no drummer.[113] They sang their lyrics over fourteen improvised instrumental tracks, as no music had been written previously. By the next morning their first collection of songs – gathered under the mock-English title of *Inascoltable* – had been put to tape. According to Chiara Righi, author of the essay *Panca Rock. Gli Skiantos e l'Arte d'Avanguardia*:

> *The title – "Inascoltable" (pronounced like the Italian word "Inascoltabile"), as well as the band name – Skiantos –, is a deliberate approximation of the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, which shows a particular tendency of the group to bend the English language into new words for comic effect. What the band is going after is a rattling sound, which employs an ironically deformed vocabulary. Even if they are singing in Italian, they are making use of allegories, double meanings and Bolognese youth slang: it is an expressive code that immediately elects them among the flag bearers of the Creative Wing of the student movement.* (Righi, 2016, p. 41)

[113] A common friend of the band who could play the drums was called in at the last minute to join the recording session (Rubini, 2012), p. 125.

The songs were primitive pieces of rock blues and rock and roll, whose lyrics heavily employed Bologna's youth slang of the time.[114] Urban alienation, sexual obsession, isolationism and paranoia were recurring themes but the general tone of the recordings is one of sarcasm and surreal irony. Political subjects are not addressed directly, on the contrary: in Skiantos music and presentation, politics is sometimes evoked with rapid, ironic allusions, almost as if it was a backdrop to the very personal events which are at the core of the band's lyrical preoccupations. Gitti, who had recently joined the Harpo's Bazaar cooperative, forwarded the recordings to Rubini who promptly decided to publish it on audio cassette as the debut release for Harpo's Music.[115] Released before the end of 1977, *Inascoltable*, was also the very first recorded output of the entire Bolognese 'new rock' scene.

Siete un Pubblico di Merda[116]

On stage, Skiantos did not want to present themselves as a typical rock ensemble who performed for passive audiences. On the contrary, they wished to push the crowd into some form of reaction as, they believed, audiences had become too accustomed to just be passive recipients for entertainment.[117] To obtain their goal, apart from attacking the public with insults and offensive ditties, the band came up with a vast array of provocative antics: one of these included throwing fruit and vegetables on the crowd from the stage. At first, audience members were baffled and surprised but after some time Skiantos fans embraced the practice and began turning up at shows with their own grocery and various other items to be hurled back at the band. Some would wear helmets, self-designed armors and grotesque home-made costumes. As a result, Skiantos concerts became occasions for all kinds of extravagant and outlandish behavior, both on and off the stage.[118]

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[114] *Permanent Flebo* from Inascoltable (Skiantos, 1977), audio available https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WK0ROe2jaJA (last access by author 20.04.2017)

[115] Harpo's Bazaar music division.

[116] *'Siete un pubblico di merda'* (*you are a shitty audience*) is a quote from a Skiantos song, 'Largo All'Avanguardia' (Skiantos, 1978). According to Gianluca Galliani, Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano first used this expression to insult their audience during their Convegno Nazionale Sulla Repressione performance in September 1977. [Gianluca Galliani in Rubini, O. (2009), p. 41]

[117] See Antoni "Freak", R., (1981)

[118] Antoni "Freak", R., (1981)

When questioned about the band's irreverent live approach Antoni has replied in these terms:

> *The basic idea behind Skiantos was to mock and ridicule all those show business clichés that could no longer be taken seriously, such as the classic rockstar figure or the on-stage attitude of the typical virtuoso musician. That's why we were shouting things like 'we are just like you, except that we simply got a little bit organized' during our shows […] Some other people in performing arts are already moving along these lines: just think about (experimental theatre group) Living Theater who are breaking all barriers between the audience and the actors with their performances. By throwing vegetables into the crowd we aim at creating a collective game: a game through which we want to show our public how all those pop/rock myths are just laughable. The divide between the noble artists on the scene and the proletarian audiences below the stage is an absurd idea that must be ridiculed.*[119]

As Antoni states, Skiantos were taking their clues from experimental theater rather than UK punk. Singer Freak Antoni even developed his own definition for the bands' sound and approach. He called it *Rock Demenziale (*'Nonsense Rock'*)* which stood for primitive rock and roll music played with an obnoxious attitude and accompanied by surreal and sarcastic lyrics (Antoni, 1981, p. 30). The definition was sometimes applied to Gaznevada as well, but Lavagna and his bandmates always strongly denied any association between themselves and the *Rock Demenziale* genre (Lavagna, 2018).

Cramps

Skiantos' *Inascoltable* quickly became a cult item, also thanks to the band's live reputation. In the following months, Gitti and Rubini recorded and released the debut cassettes of many Bolognese bands: Luti Chroma (1978), Windopen (1979) and Gaznevada (197*9).* Harpo's Music also released the first album by Sorella Maldestra, from Vercelli, another band who was associated with the *Rock Demenziale* genre. In 1978, Rubini met Gianni Sassi, label manager for Milan's Cramps Records. At the time, Cramps was Italy's most cutting-

[119] Freak Antoni interview on https://lultimathule.wordpress.com/2013/11/18/skiantos/ Last access on 04.01.2018

edge record label, home of popular *Movimento* jazz rockers Area. Cramps also enjoyed national distribution through Baby Records. Sassi immediately showed interest in Skiantos and signed them to Cramps.[120] In 1978, Skiantos released their first single *Karabignere Blues/Io Sono un Autonomo*[121] in which they mocked both law enforcement and the *Autonomia Operaia* side of the *Movimento*. In the same year, Cramps also released their second album, *Mono-Tono.*[122] Through the involvement of the Milanese record industry, Skiantos were the first band coming from the Bolognese 'new rock' to debut on record and to enjoy nation-wide distribution and promotion.

Bologna Rock

By the beginning of 1979, talks of setting up a big event which to showcase the Bolognese punk and new wave bands to a wider – albeit still local – audience became more and more frequent in Bologna's music circles (Rubini, 2017).

The first serious attempt at putting on a punk rock festival in Bologna came from two young punks called Giampaolo "Jumpy Velena" Giorgetti and Laura Carroli. Carroli and Velena were regulars at the open rehearsals that the new Bologna bands used to hold in their shared practice rooms. By 1979, bands like Gaznevada, Skiantos, Windopen and many others all rehearsed in the same *Via San Vitale* basement where they had established their musical headquarters. Due to the lack of punk venues in town, the bands would often let their friends and fans attend their rehearsals in *Via San Vitale*. These sessions also represented an occasion for the bands to test new material in front of a sympathetic audience. The bands advertised these events with graffiti on Bologna's streets, announcing dates, hours and the line-up for each session. It was through these open sessions that Velena and Laura managed to contact the groups. Their plan was to organize a festival over four consecutive Sundays in a parochial cinema (*Cinema Alemanni*), which was run by catholic priests. The dates they had chosen were February 18 and 25 and March 4 and 11,

[120] Rubini, O (ed.) (2014) *No Input, No Output. The Italian Records History (1980-1985).* Bologna: Beatstream.

[121] Skiantos (1978), *Io Sono un Autonomo/Karabignere Blues,* Italy, Cramps Records. Inserire link

[122] For more on Gianni Sassi and Cramps see Marino, M. (2013) *Gianni Sassi: Fuori di Testa* Milano:Castelvecchi

1979. The festival line up included all the main Bologna bands and a few groups from Pordenone (Tampax and HitlerSS) and Milan (Mittageisen) as well. Surprisingly, Mittageisen were announced on the festival poster as coming from Belfast. According to Carroli, Belfast was deemed a 'punkier city' than Milan by their friend Eletttro who designed the poster for the show (Carroli, 2017).

Next page: *Cinema Alemanni* Punk Festival poster (February 29, 2018)[123]

Unfortunately, the festival did not go as its young organisers had originally planned. Some bands, like Gaznevada, participated with an incomplete line-up and some others did not show up at all. Furthermore, on the first day, the priests discovered the punk nature of the festival and withdrew their support. As a consequence, the festival was cut short to just two of the four Sundays which Velena and Carroli had initially booked. Nevertheless, most of the out of town bands like Mittageisen, Tampax and HitlerSS managed to perform and contacts between the punk scenes from various Italian cities were established or reinforced on that occasion.

[123] Source: Laura Carroli's personal archive. Photo by Elisa Piatti.

With the help of his Harpo's' Bazaar cooperator Nino Iorfino, Rubini had been working on the idea of a big festival to showcase the local scene to a vast audience since 1978. Finally, they managed to hire the city's basketball stadium (the *Palasport*) for the modest price of 600,000 lire.[124] The *Bologna Rock* festival was announced for April 2, 1979 (Rubini, 2017). On that day, a crowd of six thousand people showed up for a bill which included all the main Bologna bands: Skiantos, Windopen, Luti Chroma, Gaznevada, Bieki, Naphta, Confusional Quartet, Andy J. Forest, Frigos, Cheaters and Lusk and Brusk. In typical Harpo's Bazaar style, the festival was a multimedia event. Film excerpts were projected unto the walls. Surprise concerts by unannounced acts started impromptu among the audience and in various areas of the *Palasport*. Surrealistic and often contradictory public announcements were transmitted by loudspeakers. Pre-recorded sound collage tapes were played between live concerts. Rubini and his team, who were expecting a crowd of no more than 2,000 people were overwhelmed by the size of the event (Rubini, 2017). To make matters worse, as soon as the live music began the audience immediately showed a restless attitude. Some bands were booed offstage and pelted with eggs and water bombs. As a result, by the time local heroes Skiantos took to the stage, the situation had totally escaped from the organizers' control. Furthermore, Skiantos had a very peculiar performance in mind for that occasion to further mock and demystify what they described as the '*tired rituality of the rock concert*' (Antoni, 1981, p. 86) they decided not to play at all. Instead, they began cooking and eating on stage while casually insulting the audience. At this point, the crowd went totally mad. Objects were hurled at the stage and very soon the whole area was drenched with water and other liquids, causing heavy risks of electrocution. There were at least two power failures during the night.

Some punters even tried to attack and destroy the sound mixer: only a last-minute intervention by the organizers avoided irreparable technical damage and permitted the continuation of the music performances.[125]

[124] Approximately 1770 Euros in the contemporary currency and exchange rate. Ref: http://www.infodata.ilsole24ore.com/2016/05/17/calcola-potere-dacquisto-lire-ed-euro-dal-1860-2015/?refresh_ce=1

[125] For more on the Bologna Rock Festival 1979 see Rubini (2011, 2019), Tinti (2001).

In Iorfino's recollections, by the end of the night the *Palasport* looked like an abandoned battlefield.

> '*The stage had been willingly and totally thrashed. It was hard to describe such a landscape […] The Palasport floor was flooded with an atrocious mix of feces and water […] A toilet, a TV set and a fridge were floating in the middle of it all. It looked like Woodstock but without any sense of poetry and nostalgia…'*[126]

According to Radio Alice and *Movimento del 77* ideologist Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, the Bologna Rock festival marked the end of a long era when music and politics had been closely intertwined. In his view, the festival also signaled the emergence of a new breed of urban youth.

> *This the true face of the metropolis: no more pop music and hippie weed but hard rock and hallucinogens, maybe some heroin flashes too; just like this city, this was a cocktail of violence. I was familiar with all the faces there. They all come from the 77' revolts but the politics are not there anymore.* (Bifo quoted by Marzio Fabbri in La Stampa, April 4, 1979)

Journalist Lucio Mazzi has commented:

> *If the goal of the Bologna Rock festival was to faithfully present the state of rock during those days, it must be admitted that the event was mercilessly true to its purposes. At that time, rock in Bologna meant rebellion, chaos, confused creativity, screaming, amateurship and power cuts.* (Mazzi quoted in Rubini,2011, p.92)

As Nino Iorfino has remarked, everyone – the bands, the organizers, the observers and even the audience – was taken by surprise by the events of April 2, 1979 (Rubini,2011, p.91) It must be noted that for all the chaos and confusion that characterized the proceedings, and differently from what was regularly happening at political marches and rallies in late

[126] Nino Iorfino quoted in Paolo Bertrando, *Bologna Rock* (Milano, Re Nudo, 1980), p.45

seventies, there were no reports of physical violence during the Bologna Rock festival. It was chaotic, dangerous and perhaps scary but no significant episode of aggression between human beings was reported. It can also be argued that the shock that many commentators have expressed after the event might have stemmed from their realization that, by 1979, the frustrations of Italian youth could not be channeled exclusively through political activism. Clearly, the Bologna Rock festival audience was expressing a new set of needs and desires which could not be understood and contained within the political categories of the *Movimento*, as the baffled tone of some of the above-mentioned comments is revealing. The April 1979 turmoil was a wake-up call: after ten years of cultural hegemony, the Italian Marxist left was starting to lose its grip on popular culture.

And the *teppisti* went to work

Overwhelmed by the Bologna Rock Festival experience, Rubini started thinking of ways of providing his bands with a professional support structure. In his view, the collectivist and amateurish nature of Harpo's Bazaar was inadequate to meet the expectations of the Italian music industry, which had begun to show signs of interests in the Bologna scene: Rubini had already lost Skiantos to Cramps Records and he did not want to repeat the same experience with other bands, such as Gaznevada. He started thinking about moving on to a record label structure which would focus almost exclusively on music. By late 1980, Italian Records would be born and the old collectivist and cooperative model of the *Movimento,* which had been so useful in suggesting early strategies and good practices*,* would be left behind. As a musical community, Bologna seemed to be at the beginning of a process of emancipation from Milan and Rome: it was becoming a city of music production and not only a hotbed for fresh talent. As it will be argued, this process was only partially successful.

Conclusions

I have argued that early Bolognese punk can be considered as a product of the *Ala Creativa* of the *Movimento*. Nevertheless, the two most prominent bands of that scene, Skiantos and Gaznevada, showed completely different approaches to punk and were animated by radically divergent attitudes towards the Movement.

With their crowded and ever-changing line-ups, both bands expressed a collectivist sensibility that was born out of the ideology of the Bolognese radical scene. However, it

can be argued that for all their madness, musical incompetence and tomfoolery, Skiantos did not represent a threat or a deep critique to what the Creative Wing had become by 1977, on the contrary: their alienated ditties and their surreal aesthetics matched that retreat into a personal space of confusion and ideological standstill that many members of the Italian radical front were experiencing during the *Riflusso* years. Skiantos never expressed frustration towards the *Movimento* explicitly. Even when their songs mocked the *Autonomi* Skiantos were actually lamenting the internal divisions of the *Movimento* (*Ala Creativa* against *Area Dell'Autonomia*) rather than expressing an overall critique of its cultural stasis. Their blues and classic rock influences were largely shared by the *Movimento*. Their technical incompetence as musicians was accepted too on the grounds that Skiantos were perceived as comedy act that should not be taken seriously: it was supposed to be *Rock Demenziale* after all. Ultimately, they can be considered as another of the many expressions of the *Ala Creativa*, in the aftermath of the disruptive events of 1977. In the case of Gaznevada*,* things are significantly different. Since their first efforts as Centro D'Urlo Metropolitano the band had openly declared their desire to puzzle and infuriate the *Movimento* crowd. Their musical references were obscure, post-modern and rarely shared by the members of the *Movimento*. Gaznevada's overall presentation and their cultural references drew from dystopian science fiction and action comics, rather than Marxist ideology or agrarian folklore. Popular culture, urbanisation and technology were an integral part of their aesthetic palette but the band did not dismiss them as by-products of capitalist superstructures, as was typical of influential Marxist intellectuals like Pier Paolo Pasolini.[127] Most importantly, Gaznevada immediately distanced themselves from the *Rock Demenziale* genre as they claimed to be animated by very serious intentions. They had an agenda and it had nothing to do with whatever the *Movimento* was at the time. Finally, they name-dropped punk, new wave and later no-wave and condemned what they perceived as the stasis of the Italian rock scene as opposed to the ever-evolving international underground. Gaznevada were indeed a product of the *Movimento* but they represented a form of embedded reaction/opposition to it. As a consequence, the general benevolence with which the local activists greeted Skiantos was not always there for Gaznevada: accusations of nihilism and fascism from various parts of the *Movimento* were

[127] For an example of Pasolini's critique of contemporary society and popular culture please see Pasolini, P. (1975) *Scritti Corsari* Milano: Garzanti

thrown at the band since their first appearances (Rubini, 2009, p.26). It was clear that Gaznevada were moving out of the *Movimento* circles and looking at new kind of audience that still had to be clearly identified.

Ultimately, Gaznevada, Harpo's Bazaar and Skiantos can all be considered expressions of the state of the *Area Creativa* between 1977 and 1980. Skiantos were essentially a humorous reflection of the *Movimento* about the effects that the *Riflusso* was having on many of its male members. On the other hand, Gaznevada and Harpo's Bazaar were making serious and self-conscious efforts to move away from the cultural habits and organizational practices of the Bolognese and Italian extra-parliamentary movement.

On a wider level, early Bolognese punk also showed the limitations of the *Movimento* in reading the modifications of the local urban society: these shortcomings were dramatically exposed by the baffled response that some radical intellectuals gave to the chaotic events of the Bologna Rock festival.

Chapter 7

Schiavi Nella Città Più Libera del Mondo:[128] The Second Wave of Bolognese Punk

[128] *Schiavi Nella Città più Libera del Mondo.* (1982, Attack Punk) was a 7" compilation featuring four Bolognese bands: RAF Punk, Bacteria, Stalag 17 and Anna FalkSS. The record was the first release for the Attack Punk record label which was run by RAF Punk members Laura Carroli and Helena 'Jumpy' Velena. Its title can be translated as 'Slaves in the World's Freest City': it was a sarcastic response to Mayor Renato Zangheri's praise of Bologna's tolerant administration. In a public response to an appeal for human rights signed by a group of French intellectuals after the March 1977 riots, Zangheri had described Bologna as the '*freest city in the world'.*

Main Themes and Arguments

This chapter will analyse the first steps of the second wave of Bolognese punk, with specific regard to its interaction with the earlier local scene and with the political sphere of the city, both at the extra-parliamentary and institutional level. This chapter constitutes the chronological end point of my research, since I argue that the events which took place in Bologna in June 1980 have contributed to a change within the Italian punk scene. These changes, in turn, affected the nature, practice and perception of Italian punk as a subculture throughout the 80s and early 90s.

In the first part of this section, we will see how, between 1979 and 1980, a generally younger group of locals had begun to actively embrace punk, on the heels of the first wave of the local 'new rock' scene. Some of the members of the second generation did have social ties with the older punks but the musical and political reference points which shaped the articulations of their active involvement with this subculture were radically different. For this reason, I have adopted the definition 'second wave of Bolognese punk' to describe this new approach, as opposed to the first wave, which has been the focus of the previous chapter. I am aware of the epistemological shortcomings which are implied in a clear-cut separation between these two social groups and musical scenes: my research has in fact confirmed the existence of a complex network of intertwining personal histories, political experiences and musical identities between members of the two early 'waves' of Bolognese punk. Even if I have tried to consistently incorporate this fluid interaction in my reconstruction of events, I have decided to keep the two waves approach for the analysis of the local scene. From my perspective, this distinction can be useful for two essential reasons: first it highlights the desire of the new Bolognese bands to distinguish themselves from the previous scene.[129] Moreover, it stresses how much the relationship with politics separates the approach of the very early local punks and the rising late-seventies scene. Indeed, the most noticeable feature of the second wave was exactly an outspoken tension towards serious political commitment which the earlier local punks were devoid of.

The second wave of Bolognese punk adopted an approach which distinguished it from both its predecessor and, at least initially, from the 1977 Movement as well. The more

[129] From the early 1980s, to further remark their difference from the first wave, Anarcho-punk scene members would start spelling the words punk or punks with a final 'X' (Punx) in all their communications.

experienced members of the new scene were determined to distance themselves from the remains of the *Movimento*, having witnessed its latest unsuccessful developments and current stalemate condition. My argument is that the openly political nature of the second wave of Bolognese punk did resonate with the historical tradition of Italian ideological antagonism, as opposed to the nihilistic articulations of first wave punk. This focus on politics was heavily influenced by the Anarcho-punk scene spearheaded by UK band Crass and their DIY network: it will be argued that the second wave of Bolognese, and later Italian, punk found a new connection with the local political reality by following a path which initially pointed abroad. The otherness of punk's presentation in the Italian context, reinforced by its international origins, was a decisive factor in a process of reinvention of individual and group identity. In order to define themselves as different from their peers, the young punks had to initially stress the distinctive elements which their new identity was bringing in the Italian context of the time: the brutality of the music, the unruliness of the attitude, the outrageous look. At an early stage, these 'exotic' subcultural features concealed the actual similarities between several practices of Crass-inspired DIY action and Italian long-seventies political activism. Indeed, the punks embraced issues which were often already present within the political palette of the 1977 Movement but were often dismissed as consequences of secondary contradictions of capitalism by orthodox Marxists. Questions such as animal liberation, vegetarianism, ecology and pacifism were instead brought to the fore by the punks and became staples of their political action. Moreover, as opposed to the vast array of interpretations of Marxism which were running through the 1977 Movement, the ideological backbone of the new scene became Anarchism (Philopat, 1977). Nevertheless, we will see how the punks' generic adoption of a storied political tradition, albeit filtered through a new subcultural approach, did allow them to find a collocation on the fringes of Italy's political scenario.

However, the characteristics of the new punk scene were not only shaped by their relationship with radical extra-parliamentary politics and with their subcultural predecessors, be it local or international. The new wave of Bolognese punk addressed institutional local politics directly, questioning the city's established reputation as a progressive and tolerant community. In the final section of the present chapter, we will see how the public administration has played an active role in the definition of Bologna's subcultural status by bringing punk into the city's wider political dialectic. From 1980 the

PCI-led administration would undertake a series of initiatives which were aimed at re-establishing dialogue with the local radical community after the dramatic events of the late seventies. As will be argued, some of these actions, will determine a further shift in the development of the Bolognese punk scene. At the national level, the actions of the administration will also have repercussions on the cultural politics of the Italian Communist Party and they will reinforce the status of Bologna as a unique subcultural hub in Italian public opinion. Furthermore, the different reactions to the town government initiative will expose the differences between the first and the second wave of Bolognese punk: these differences will soon be extended at the national level too, thus determining the beginning of a new season for the Italian punk movement.

Politically, the progressive abandonment of first wave punk in favour of more ideologically conscious articulations of this subcultural style can be seen as a reconciliation with the Italian radical tradition. In particular, the Anarcho-punk and hardcore scenes will thrive in the Italian underground by interlacing their fortunes with the *Centri Sociali* (politically active squats) circuit. This circuit would often see the Anarcho-punks share social spaces and political struggles with radical militants who were sometimes veterans of the Long Seventies. Throughout the 1980s, this overlapping of subcultural and political identities influenced the general perception of the punk subculture in Italy: punk was often associated with radical politics and activism, as well as an uncompromising musical style, lifestyle and look. As Alessia Masini (2018, 2019) has recently argued, Anarcho-punk and the hardcore scene managed to safeguard practices of political engagement and ideological antagonism well beyond the tail end of the Long Seventies, thus becoming one of the few voices of radicalism which actively opposed the gradual 'normalisation' of Italian society. I am arguing that the staying power of Anarcho-punk and hardcore in the Italian subcultural panorama, as opposed to the more volatile status of early 'nihilistic' punk, is mainly attributable to this specific process of reconciliation with the radical political sphere which the second wave of Bolognese punk had kickstarted. This is further confirmation that the degree of success of rock-related subcultures, during the Italian Long Seventies and throughout the extended aftermath of that historical period, was determined by the degree of ideological authentication which the political sphere, be it extra-parliamentary or institutional, was ready to concede.

Structure

The first part of this chapter will trace the personal history of Laura Carroli, Anarcho-punk activist and drummer for RAF Punk, one of the most prominent bands of the second wave of Bolognese punk rock. RAF Punk played a pivotal role in the development of the second wave of Bolognese punk: in 1981, the band started Attack Punk, one of the first DIY labels which was run by members of the local punk scene. They produced their own fanzine and managed *Punkaminazione*, a DIY network whose outspoken mission was to coordinate the activities of the Italian Anarcho-punk underground. Laura Carroli's reconstruction of events is particularly significant in the context of this research work because it embodies the arc of Bolognese punk rock, from its beginnings, in the wake of the disillusionment generated by the disintegration of the 1977 Movement, to the new desire for political engagement which the Anarcho-punk movement brought into the scene, mainly through the influence of the Crass DIY network. The chapter introduces Carroli's RAF Punk bandmate Helena 'Jumpy' Velena and her fundamental role in the shaping of the second wave of Bolognese punk.

The central part of the chapter will be dedicated to the formation of RAF Punk and to the construction of their Anarcho-punk identity, through the influence of UK band and Anarchist collective Crass. In the final part, the focus will be on the 1980 *Ritmicittà Festival.* Specific attention will be given to the events of June 1, when leading UK punk group The Clash performed their first Italian concert in Bologna's main square. As argued in the previous paragraph, this event caused important repercussions for the local music scene and for Bologna's rising status as a leading punk city in Italy.

Laura Carroli / Musical Identity

The beginnings of Laura Carroli's relationship with rock music reflect that pattern of constant intersection between the musical and ideological sphere which characterised the life of many Italian teenagers during the Long Seventies.

In fact, her passion for rock music developed alongside her involvement with politics:

> *Typically, in those times music and politics were really connected. If you got into rock music, you would very often end up into politics and if you got into politics you would soon start listening to what the other comrades were listening to. My memories are sometimes a bit blurred about what came first for me, as the fusion between music and politics seemed so seamless and organic back then. In my case though, I think music was the first step into that world. Rock music was the gateway for my involvement into radical ideals in my high school years.* (Carroli, 2017)

Born into a working-class family – her mother was a primary school teacher and her father worked for the national postal service – Carroli had her first encounter with international rock music thanks to an episode which involved future Gaznevada member and Radio Alice DJ Giorgio Lavagna:

> *I wanted to have a New Year's Eve music party at my house and through some common acquaintances we invited Giorgio Lavagna and his friends. These kids were big music lovers and they brought their own records and stereo system. After the party, Giorgio and his friends just left their albums at my house and I spent the first few days of 1973 listening to all these records and falling in love with them. The albums were big sixties/early seventies rock classics: the Woodstock film soundtrack, Iron Butterfly, Jim Capaldi, Uriah Heep. That incidental experience made a rock fan out of me: previously I was listening to Italian pop music like Lucio Battisti and some popular progressive rock bands like Premiata Forneria Marconi.* (Carroli, 2017)

Laura attended her first international rock concert in March 1973: it was the second Bolognese date for UK progressive band Jethro Tull during their European tour. Carroli,

accompanied by her mother, attended the second show which was held in the city's *Palasport*[130], on Monday 19. Two days before, on the occasion of the band's first Bolognese concert, there had been a large-scale riot between a delegation of *Autoriduttori* – joined by several other concert goers – and the police.[131] Even if the show which Laura Carroli attended was not interrupted by riots or violence, she remembers the tense atmosphere inside and outside the *Palasport* as riot police were patrolling the area around the venue to prevent further incidents. That climate of looming danger, she remembers, gave her an early awareness of how music was totally involved in the ideological struggles of the times.[132]

Political Identity

During her high school years, Laura was attracted by different areas of radical activism. With a group of girlfriends, she began attending the afternoon sessions of the *Cafiero* Anarchist circle. She was also attending afternoon meetings at *Gatto Selvaggio* (Wild Cat), another Bolognese political circle affiliated to the radical Marxist formation *Autonomia Operaia*. In 1974, some members of *Gatto Selvaggio* were involved in a violent armed robbery.[133] Links between some of the activists and Marxist terrorist groups emerged during investigations. Carroli's father witnessed the police arrest of one of the members of *Gatto Selvaggio* who was working at the same postal office where he was employed. According to Carroli, this was another episode which gave her a real sense of how political violence had become a regular presence in her life as a teenager. By her own admission, it was a desire for a less violent approach to political engagement which led her to join *Indiani Metropolitani,* the most libertarian and creative current of the local *Movimento*. *Indiani Metropolitani* were breaking away from orthodox Marxism to embrace methods of struggle

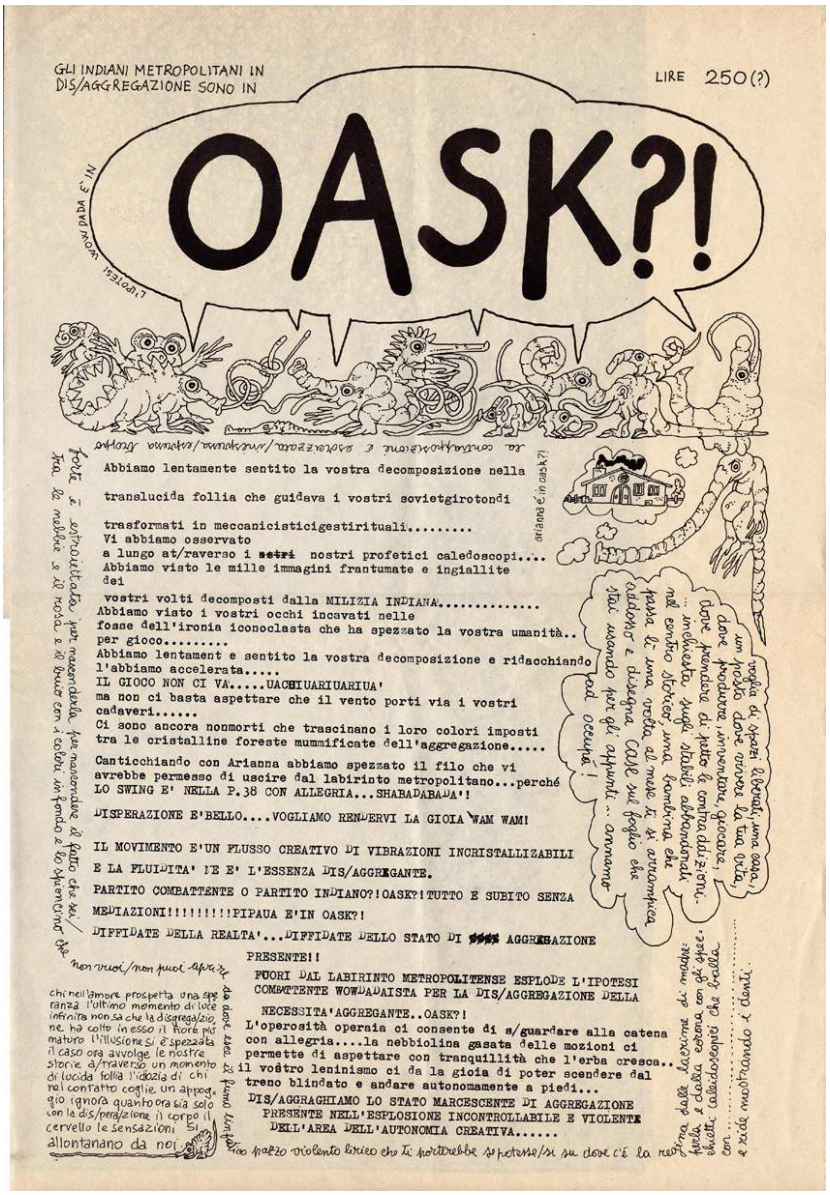
[130] The city's basketball stadium.

[131] http://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/2008/12/16/139315-concerti_bolognesi_jethro_tull.shtml

[132] Laura Carroli, interview with author, 20.10.2017

[133] It was common practice for clandestine armed struggle groups to finance themselves with robberies. In this particular case, Laura Carroli is referring to an episode, known as *I Fatti di Argelato* which cost the life of one *Carabinieri* officer. One of the robbers, belonging to the *Potere Operaio* and *Lavoro Illegale* groups, was severely wounded as well (Schaerf, 1992).

which borrowed shock techniques from avant-garde movements such as Surrealism and Dada. *Indiani Metropolitani* also recaptured much of the idealism and cultural references of the late-sixties hippie movement. This put them at odds with the *Area dell'Autonomia* which was, on the contrary, committed to a hardline workerist stance (Balestrini and Moroni, 2015). Always according to Carroli, it was during her time with Indiani Metropolitani that she embraced vegetarianism.


GLI INDIANI METROPOLITANI IN DIS/AGGREGAZIONE SONO IN

LIRE 250(?)

OASK?!

Abbiamo lentamente sentito la vostra decomposizione nella

translucida follia che guidava i vostri sovietgirotondi

trasformati in meccanicisticigestirituali.....

Vi abbiamo osservato

a lungo at/raverso i ~~sotri~~ nostri profetici caledoscopi....

Abbiamo visto le mille immagini frantumate e ingiallite

dei

vostri volti decomposti dalla MILIZIA INDIANA.....

Abbiamo visto i vostri occhi incavati nelle

fosse dell'ironia iconoclasta che ha spezzato la vostra umanità..

per gioco.....

Abbiamo lentament e sentito la vostra decomposizione e ridacchiando

l'abbiamo accelerata.....

IL GIOCO NON CI VA.....UACHIUARIUARIUA'

ma non ci basta aspettare che il vento porti via i vostri

cadaveri.....

Ci sono ancora nonmorti che trascinano i loro colori imposti

tra le cristalline foreste mummificate dell'aggregazione.....

Canticchiando con Arianna abbiamo spezzato il filo che vi

avrebbe permesso di uscire dal labirinto metropolitano...perché

LO SWING E' NELLA P.38 CON ALLEGRIA...SHABADABADA'!

DISPERAZIONE E'BELLO....VOGLIAMO RENDERVI LA GIOIA WAM WAM!

IL MOVIMENTO E'UN FLUSSO CREATIVO DI VIBRAZIONI INCRISTALLIZZABILI

E LA FLUIDITA' E' E' L'ESSENZA DIS/AGGREGANTE.

PARTITO COMBATTENTE O PARTITO INDIANO?!OASK?!TUTTO E SUBITO SENZA

MEDIAZIONI!!!!!!!!!PIPAUA E'IN OASK?!

DIFFIDATE DELLA REALTA'...DIFFIDATE DELLO STATO DI ~~####~~ AGGREGAZIONE

PRESENTE!!

FUORI DAL LABIRINTO METROPOLITENSE ESPLODE L'IPOTESI

COMBATTENTE WOWDADAISTA PER LA DIS/AGGREGAZIONE DELLA

NECESSITA'AGGREGANTE..OASK?!

L'operosità operaia ci consente di s/guardare alla catena

con allegria....la nebbiolina gasata delle mozioni ci

permette di aspettare con tranquillità che l'erba cresca..

il vostro leninismo ci da la gioia di poter scendere dal

treno blindato e andare autonomamente a piedi...

DIS/AGGRAGHIAMO LO STATO MARCESCENTE DI AGGREGAZIONE

PRESENTE NELL'ESPLOSIONE INCONTROLLABILE E VIOLENTE

DELL'AREA DELL'AUTONOMIA CREATIVA.....

(the first issue of OASK, a short lived *Indiani Metropolitani* fanzine from 1977)

It is easy to see how Carroli's attraction for the post-political approach of the *Indiani Metropolitani*, was channeling her desire to experience social engagement in alternative

forms which steered away from the violence of other expressions of Italian extra-parliamentarism. In the same period, Laura also began regularly attending Feminist meetings. The encompassing critique of the patriarchal structures of Italian society which the Feminists were conducting did not spare the *Movimento,* whose organisation, language and hierarchy often reflected the above-mentioned structures. Crucially, these and many other issues emerged in all their gravity during the September 1977 *Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione* (National Conference on Repression).[134] Frustration for the Movement's internal divisions, the harshness of state repression and the ever-growing climate of violence were taking their toll on many militants. The *Convegno* was held in September 1977, six months after the Bolognese revolts and the shocking military repression which had inflicted another heavy blow to the *Movimento*. All this caused a wave of disillusionment within the ranks of the Movement, both at local and national level: narratives about *Riflusso*[135] began to take more and more credit accompanied by a defeatist rhetoric for the perspectives of radical change which the *Movimento* had promised. This climate is explained by Carroli:

> *After the Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione most of us felt totally let down. We were so sure that, in the end, we would have succeeded in changing our country – and the world – that watching our dream fall apart under our eyes was unbearable for many of us. Some just got sucked into regular society, other people resorted to clandestine armed struggle, some to mysticism. Many started doing heavy drugs. Heroin had suddenly become available at incredibly cheap prices: it replaced all other drugs on the market. Many people who used to smoke marijuana could not find it anymore and started doing heroin as a replacement.* (Carroli, 2017)

As a consequence, she decided to take a break from the Movement. In her words, punk was a way to make *tabula rasa* of the disappointments of her *Movimento* past:

[134] Details on the *Convegno Nazionale sulla Repressione* have been provided in the fourth and sixth chapters of the present work.

[135] Details on the concept of *Riflusso* have been provided in the fourth chapter of the present work.

> *I had no time to let the disappointment sink in as, luckily, I immediately threw myself into punk. I burned my bridges with my past experiences: punk gave me the chance to start again. It was a true rebirth from me. I had seen very big illusions fall apart, so the year zero approach of punk really helped me leave all that behind my back and start again.* (Carroli, 2017)

I will now show how, having witnessed the disbandment of the *Movimento*, and in particular the descent of many activists into heroin addiction, influenced the second wave of Bolognese punk's policy towards drug consumption and other recreational habits of late-seventies militants.

From Bologna to Reading (and back)

According to her recollections Laura's first encounter with punk music happened at the beginning of 1977, thanks to Giorgio Lavagna's radio show on Radio Alice. Even if rumours about this new musical trend had already started circulating – together with some timid press reports – first hand news about punk were still a rarity in Italy. As Carroli remembers:

> *There was some talk about this punk thing from the UK, but you could not get much information on it back then. I remember a newsagent shop in the town centre who kept a few copies of the New Musical Express but my grasp of the English language was very bad at the time. In the Italian press and media in general punk was presented as a nihilistic juvenile delinquency phenomenon. It was bad mouthed everywhere, in the political press as well as in the music publications or in general public magazines.* (Carroli, 2017)

In summer 1978, Carroli heard about a forthcoming London concert by Patti Smith, one of her favourite artists. Smith was one of the few new wave acts who already enjoyed enormous popularity with the *Movimento* crowd. [136] Unbeknownst to Carrroli, the Patti

[136] Smith's popularity in Italy peaked with her 1979 tour, when she played in Bologna and Florence stadiums to enormous crowds. Those two shows would be the last public concerts for the New York artist before she announced her temporary retirement from music. Ref. Matteo Zampollo,

Smith's concert was *de facto* a headlining slot at the Reading Festival for the New York singer and poet. To attend the show, Laura decided to embark on a trip to the UK with two girlfriends.

However, when they finally reached the ticket office of the 1978 Reading Festival, Laura and her friends found out that the could not afford the entrance fee. Therefore, they decided to apply some techniques which they had learned from the *Autoriduzioni* movement:

> *We had very little money, but we were used to the Autoriduzioni practices in Italy, therefore for us it was simply unthinkable to just get in line and pay: we had to try and get in for free! Actually, we were quite shocked to see the punks quietly queuing at the gates. We thought they were delinquents, or at least that's how the Italian press presented them. Only a small group of hardline punks was trying to distract the security to help some kids get in for free. They would charge a small amount of money for that service. We tried to take advantage of their help too, but due to our very bad grasp of the English language we couldn't find an agreement with them. In the end, we decided to crawl in from under the toilets and we managed to sneak into the festival for free. Actually, for a moment one of us got caught by security but she eventually freed herself and escaped into the crowd. I guess we gained the punks' respect with that move. I think they were also impressed by the garbage bags that we were using as covers for our sleeping bags.* (Carroli, 2017)

In fact, before and after breaking into the festival the three Bolognese girls managed to befriend some punk kids and the impression they got from them was very different from the bleak and threatening portraits which could be often found in the Italian press.

> *We made friends with some punks and we realized that they were not the nihilistic, proto-fascist thugs that the Italian media, music press and public opinion was going*

http://www.rollingstone.it/musica/news-musica/patti-smith-ricorda-concerto-firenze-1979/2015-10-07/ (last access 17.02.2018)

> *on about. On the contrary, they were extremely young, naive and enthusiastic. Their fresh approach impressed us, and we were caught up in their excitement. They were all very friendly and welcoming to us and we ended up hanging out with them all the time. We watched all the punk bands in the Festival line-up that year […]* (Carroli, 2017)

Indeed, the 1978 Reading Festival featured a substantial selection of punk bands.[137] Ultravox, Sham 69, Radio Stars, The Jam, Penetration, Radio Stars, Chelsea all took the stage during the three-day gathering, alongside new wave and punk associated acts such as The Tom Robinson Band, Squeeze, The Motors and, obviously, The Patti Smith Group. In Carroli's memory, this journey changed her forever:

> *[…] I was so electrified by the whole experience! Before we left for our trip some of our friends had been warning us, saying that the punks were going to kill us or worse. As soon as I got back, I started telling everyone that what they had been hearing about punk wasn't true at all: punks were extremely nice, and they had something really exciting going on for themselves. I started spreading the word and music in Bologna: I was looking for kindred spirits and I found one in a boy who I already knew, Giampiero, now Helena Velena* (Carroli, 2017).

Helena Velena and 'Other' Identities

On her website singer, actor, poet, writer and all-round activist Helena Velena describes her late seventies self, who went by the name of *Jumpy Velena*, as a '*transgender identity who had not reached full conscience yet.'*[138] Her age is not known, but she claims to be born in the 1960s.[139] Coming from a small town near Bologna, Velena moved to the city in 1977 while she was still a teenager.

[137] http://www.ukrockfestivals.com/reading-78.html last accessed on 17.10.2018

[138] http://www.helenavelena.com/page1/page1.html last access by the author on 17.10.2018

[139] Ibid.

By 1978, she had already been through some political experiences in the *Movimento*: in particular she had been a speaker for *Radio Alice*. Around this time, she adopted the nickname *Jumpy Velena*. In her contribution to the book *Lumi di Punk*, Velena clearly remembers her early frustration with the *Movimento* and the *Radio Alice* environment. Particularly, Velena resented the Movimento's heteronormative mindset.

> *I was hanging around the Movimento scene […] I did not feel too much at ease with the comrades because they already had a very bureaucratic and predetermined structure, even if the overall vibes in Bologna were really good…Radio Alice, Indiani Metropolitani…Nevertheless, I had some other needs…that situation [the Movimento] had been built by somebody else and it had strong limitations: the men were always clearly separated from the women, for instance […]*
> *'[…] even if they had feminist collectives the women were considered B-league creatures in the movement.* (Velena in Philopat, 2006, pp. 23 and 26)

Velena was also very critical of the musical tastes of the *Movimento* as well, accusing the Italian activists of merely listening to Italian folk and pop singers.

> *[…] if you look at the records that have been found in the Red Brigades coves… it is ghastly […] in the best cases, and I mean in the best cases, they'd listen to Guccini[140], sometimes they even found some Nicola Di Bari…[141]* (Velena in Philopat, 2006, p. 30)

Velena was also openly dismissive of the *Movimento's* unspoken male and female dress code, which she considered boring and unconsciously betraying an undercurrent of what she described as 'sex phobia' (Velena in Philopat, 2006, p. 30)
When her friend Laura Carroli came back from the Reading festival and started wearing punk clothes in public, this intolerant attitude became particularly evident in Velena's eyes.

[140] Francesco Guccini is a popular Italian folk/pop singer songwriter who specialised in political songs

[141] Nicola Di Bari was a sentimental Italian pop singer, who had risen to fame for winning two consecutive editions of the popular *Sanremo Festival* competition.

> *Laura started to turn up at political collective meetings [in her punk look] and the first-generation feminists clearly couldn't stand her.* (Velena in Philopat, 2006, p. 26)

On this subject Laura Carroli has confirmed that her 'provocative' punk look, which included the use of leather clothes, heavy make-up and black stockings, was aggressively criticised by her feminist collective: many militants thought that she was objectifying herself and embodying male fetishist fantasies. Laura has replied to this criticism as follows:

> *I was dressing in that way because I had chosen to do so. I strongly recognised myself in that look and I did not feel like I was doing it for anybody else but myself. And the way I looked was certainly not what men were expecting from a woman, on the contrary. As a result, I was getting trouble from both the feminists and from square people as well.*
>
> *I think we (punks) were unconsciously anticipating many of the contemporary approaches to feminism and homosexuality in terms of sexual freedom and being in control of one's image. We were instinctively attracted by the transgenderism and the androgyny of the punk image, by the fact that there were no boundaries between gender roles: we experimented a lot with that, especially Helena. But the Feminists did not understand that at the time: they were too regimented and often very aggressive towards us.* (Carroli, 2017)

Despite the criticism, Laura continued spreading the word about punk among her friends. Apart from Velena, with whom she had also started a romantic relationship, one of the first people that she converted to the punk credo was a teenage girl who called herself Eletttro. The trio of Carroli, Velena and Eletttro immediately formed a fictional band, but they could not play music nor owned musical instruments. For a while, the first nucleus of what was to become the second generation of Bologna's punk was composed by two girls and a '*transgender identity who had not reached full conscience yet'.* Even when their group increased in numbers to include new recruits, Carroli remembers, were for the most part girls. The boys who joined them were 'absolutely non-macho' and a few of them later came out as gay (Carroli, 2017).

According to Velena, punk had galvanized her small group of friends so much that they felt like they had found a new platform and identity for themselves.

> *I feel like I've been saved [by punk]…It was not just the same old story along the lines of 'what can a poor boy do except to sing for a rock and roll band'…this thing became a salvation process from something very specific…all of sudden, instead of the cultural dictatorship and the categorical imperatives of the comrades – according to whom everything had been already defined, planned, sanctioned and even criticized and solved - we had found something that we could elaborate by ourselves, where we could be the protagonists, without necessarily having to follow in the footsteps of our older brothers.* (Velena in Philopat, 2006, p. 25)

Velena's words clearly show how punk was initially perceived as a chance for free expression for identities that had been neglected so far, even within environment of the *Area Creativa.*

Outside of Society

Between 1978 and 1979, the new punk collective composed by Velena, Carroli and Eletttro was augmented by new members. Apart from prime mover Laura and the precocious Jumpy Velena, most of the new punks were way too young to have had any significant political experience in the *Movimento*. According to Carroli, their social background was mixed: some of them came from the lower middle-class, others from a more privileged upbringing, but most of them – like Eletttro, Carroli herself and future RAF Punk member and Nabat singer, Stefano "Steno" Cimato - belonged to the working class. From the beginning, the second wave punks adopted a hard look made of studded belts, heavy boots, black leather and spiky hair. This cost them the ostracism of most bars, pubs and even the usual social hangouts of the *Movimento,* where their image was often a cause for trouble. For this reason, they mainly gathered in private houses. Carroli remembers:

> *Because of the way we looked, even going out for a drink became a problem. There was never a table for us. Actually, there was only one pizza restaurant owner from*

> *Naples who always let us in, probably because he felt some form of compassion for us or because he was slightly bemused by our appearance. As a result, we started gathering in private homes. We'd often meet at the house of one of us who had lost both his parents: we were all very jealous of him because to us he had been set free. It was in his house that we started thinking about creating some kind of punk network.* (Carroli, 2017)

Not even the opening of Bologna's first punk venue, *Punkreas,* really affected the new punks' sense of displacement.

> *We did hang around Punkreas and we attended the shows there, but we were kind of dismissive of the venue because in our eyes, it was a place run by old-time hippies. Furthermore, there was a lot of heroin consumption there and we had a strong anti-drugs stance: we did not want to repeat the mistakes of the Movimento.* (Carroli, 2017)

For a while, the only place where the new punks felt really at ease was the Harpo's Bazaar's office in via San Felice, were they spent hours talking to Oderso Rubini and his wife Anna Persiani. Another safe haven was the Via San Vitale practice room centre where most of Bologna's rock bands would hold open rehearsals. According to both Carroli and Velena, the new punks entertained pretty good relationships with the first Bologna rock scene. Carroli, Velena and Eletttro even tried to organize the first comprehensive punk festival ever in Bologna: they invited most of the first wave bands to play, but they only partially succeeded in their intent.[142]

[142] See chapter 6 of the present work

Ideology

At the beginning of 1979, the punks managed to solve the problem of not having a regular meeting place, as Carroli convinced the Anarchist militants of the Bernieri circle to let them use one of their rooms. The Bologna Anarchists proved to be the only political group that was willing to give the new punks shelter:

> *I don't know if they understood us, but I guess that their Anarchist beliefs somehow forced them to accept us without asking too many questions. However, the support of the Bolognese Anarchist circuit was crucial for us on many occasions.* (Carroli, 2017)

The willingness of the Anarchists to accept the punks was the first step of the Second Wave towards a reconciliation with Italy's tradition of political radicalism. In fact, albeit marginalised in the main ideological polarisation of post-war Italy, Anarchism fully belonged to the history of Italian political activism since the second half of the 19th century (Berti and De Maria, 2016). During the Long Seventies, its voice was still heard through a network of local circles, political journals and various initiatives run by the Italian Anarchist Federation. In the field of popular music, famous folk singers like Fabrizio De Andrè and Francesco Guccini made sure that the Anarchist songbook and ethos was not forgotten. Moreover, the memory of the Sacco and Vanzetti case - nurtured through film, literature and song as well as in historical and political discourse - had become a staple in the collective consciousness of the Italian left.[143] However, especially during the Long

[143] Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were two Italian Anarchist factory workers who had migrated to the United Stated at the beginning of the 20th century. Their radical trade-union activism and their outspoken anarchist ideas were noticed by the authorities, especially after they refused to serve in the US Army during World War one. Having been arrested for the illegal possession of guns in 1921, they were also accused of being responsible of an armed robbery which had caused the death of two people: despised a substantial lack of evidence of their involvement in the murderous crime, they were sentenced to death and executed in 1927 by the state of Massachusetts. The Sacco and Vanzetti affair caused a wide national and international mobilisation in favour of the two anarchists: many Sacco and Vanzetti supporters believed that the US government wanted to punish the anarchists for their political beliefs and that the murder accusations against them had been fabricated. In 1977, the Governor of Massachusetts, Michael Dukakis issued a public apology, clearing Sacco and Vanzetti's memory from the murder accusations.

Seventies, the Italian state too would make use of the anarchists as political scapegoats for some of the most horrific crimes of the Long Seventies.[144] Episodes such the as the tragic Valpreda-Pinelli case[145] generated further empathy for the Anarchists in the Marxist extra-parliamentary milieu, despite ideological differences.

The Name is *Crass*[146]

Nevertheless, the support of the local activists was not the leading factor that led the second wave of Bolognese punk towards Anarchism. As Carroli has remarked, the Bolognese anarchists were willing to tolerate the young punks but could not share nor understand their subcultural articulations. The punks were still looking for a way combine their new identity with their desire for political engagement. They would soon find a reference point in the activity of UK Anarcho-punk band Crass.

Velena and Carroli managed to catch Crass live during one trip to London in summer 1979. Impressed by the band's live impact and sense of purpose, they approached singer Steve Ignorant who invited them to their community house in Epping. The experience proved very influential. According to Carroli, the encounter with Crass also helped her solve some of the personal questions caused by the relationship between her experiences with the Movimento and her new punk identity.

> *I was a vegetarian, but I would never mention it because I thought it would have been considered very hippie-like by the other punks. Crass showed me how to be a punk and a vegetarian at the same time: it was very liberating. They also made sense*

[144] Unlike other radical political traditions such as Communism and Fascism, Anarchism did not enjoy parliamentary representation in the constitutional arc of the Italian republic.

[145] Anarchist activist Giuseppe Pinelli was accused of being directly involved in the Piazza Fontana bombing (December 1969), one of the first terrorist attacks which have been later ascribed by historians to the 'strategy of tension'. The anarchist militant died under yet to be clarified circumstances while he was in custody of the Milanese police. For the same attack, another Anarchist militant, Pietro Valpreda, was condemned to 15 years in prison. Decades later, the cases against Pinelli and Valpreda were proven to be inconsistent: finally, a 2005 verdict established that the responsibility for the bombing, which caused the death of 17 people, was ascribable to two members of neo fascist group *Ordine Nuovo* who had acted in cooperation with non-specified members of national and international secret services (Schaerf, 1992)

[146] Quote from *Crass, White Punks on Hope [Crass records, 1979]*

> *of all the talk of Anarchy within the punk movement: finally, it all had a real, constructive meaning. Furthermore, they gave us several tips on how to start and manage our own punk activities in total autonomy* (Carroli, 2017)

Crass were a punk band which lived and acted like an Anarchist collective. The band did not only record and release music: they engaged with direct political action and almost exclusively played in squats or community houses. Crass led a collective life-style which inspired the band's music and presentation. They stood for egalitarianism, animal welfare, pacifism and ultimately Anarchism. Most of the practices that Crass experimented would soon be gathered under the Do It Yourself (DIY) acronym and inspired a worldwide underground movement which still exists to this day. Furthermore, they managed their own record label, Crass Records, which produced and released several other bands, with the main purpose of introducing other groups and collectives to DIY practices. In 1982, Crass rose to public attention in the UK with the release of the *Thatchergate Tapes*, an audio collage of a phone conversation between Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan about the Falkland war, made by editing audio excerpts taken from real speeches by the two politicians (Berger, 2008).

RAF Punk

After meeting with Crass and their collective, Laura and Velena came back to Italy: in autumn 1979, they formed RAF Punk, the first Italian self-described Anarcho-punk group. Even if their name recalls the acronym of *Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF),* an armed Marxist terrorist group which was mostly active in Germany between through the seventies and the eighties, the band remarked that their name actually stood for *Rebel Anarchist Fraction* instead, as they considered themselves pacifists. The line-up was made by Carroli on drums, Velena on vocals, Carlo Chiapparini and Massimo Poggi on guitars and Stefano 'Steno' Cimato' on bass. They also started thinking of taking advantage of the printing facilities of Bologna's anarchist circles to produce their own fanzine and covers for future records: in fact, they were already considering the option of starting their own label.[147] They also began distributing Crass records and various material in Italy, thus beginning to establish a

[147] Attack Punk Records which began its activities in 1981.

net of contacts between the UK, Bologna and the rest of Italy. At the same time, the band set themselves on a long and frustrating search for a place where they could rehearse their music and host shows by other punk bands. Thanks to the authentication provided by Crass, with whom they always entertained a collaborative relationship, the new wave of Bolognese punk had finally found a voice in which they could make themselves heard in their local context.

Ritmicittà

In 1980, the rift that the events of March 1977 and their aftermath had carved between the local administration and Bologna's radical youth seemed impossible to bridge. Mayor Zangheri's local government, which was already ruling the city at the time of the 1977 riots, was determined to heal that wound and to rebuild Bologna's reputation for sensitive and humanist civic rule. Furthermore, in June 1980 a new round of local elections was due, and the *PCI* wanted to recapture the consent of part of the local youth. With this idea in mind, the Mayor and his team started thinking about a series of events and initiatives specifically designed for the young Bolognese population. A team of cultural administrators, which included future Bologna Mayor Walter Vitali, was nominated by the city council (Rubini and Tinti, 2003). Prior to this appointment, Vitali had spent a few years in Rome as the national representative of the Italian Communist students. While in Rome he had witnessed the daring cultural experimentations of the Communist administration of the city (Nicolini, 2011). Imagining a similar renaissance for the cultural policies of Bologna's administration, Vitali soon recruited his friend and former *Movimento* sympathizer Mauro Felicori as a cultural advisor (Rubini and Tinti, 2003). Felicori was well aware that the core of what was left of the Bolognese *Movimento* laid in what was formerly known as the *creative wing* and that dialogue with this vital part of the local community needed to be reprised as soon as possible. This view was not necessarily shared by the Communist Party which, both at local and national level, was still at war with the radical Marxist area of *Autonomia Operaia* as well as with the *Ala Creativa*. In the past few years, sarcastic critique of the Communist Party cultural obsolescence had been one of the main arguments of the *Ala Creativa*: this was not going to be forgiven easily. Vitali clearly remembers how the debate on this issue created a divide between the Bolognese *PCI* and the city's administration:

> *The most creative and intellectually conscious expression of the Movimento manifested itself in Bologna. While all the emerging theories at that time were still rehashing Marxist categories, in Bologna some different ideas were being developed within the Movimento. […] That was the motivation for our deep dissent from the PCI's drastic rejection of that movement: our position led us to engage in a harsh fight with the PCI, especially in Bologna. (Felicori in Rubini and Tinti, 2003, p. 220)*

Bologna's cultural officers also believed that it was necessary to incorporate the unorthodox expressions of the *Ala Creativa* into the city's productive fabric. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to reprise the Bolognese model of participatory democracy, which had been the successful political trademark of the city since the post-war period: a trademark which had been established by the *Partito Comunista* itself.

To do so, the Bologna administration was consciously bypassing the party line: both Zangheri and Vitali were acting according to their appointment as local council administrators, rather than Communist Party members. Mauro Felicori began working on a project for free art and music festival to be held in the city's main square, Piazza Maggiore. The festival was called *Ritmicittà.*[148] The goal for the local administration was showcasing the freshest creative energies of the city, while making them an active part in the organisation of the event too. Oderso Rubini's *Harpo's Bazaar* roster was an obvious choice for the definition of the local pop rock line-up of the festival. In fact, the focus of the musical program of the festival was on the emerging sounds of punk and new wave: many bands, most of them belonging to the new Italian and *Bolognese* rock scene, were invited to play. Bolognese first wave bands Gaznevada, Skiantos, Luti Chroma, Confusional Quartet and Windopen all had a chance to perform in the first three days of the festival.

In order to enrich the festival carnet and augment its visibility, Vitali also wanted to book an important international name to headline the closing night. Felicori turned to his friend and *Lotta Continua* music journalist Massimo Buda for advice: he recommended *The Clash* as the best choice for the festival's finale on June 1. As it turned out, that choice of headliners and the entire festival initiative proved to be much more controversial and problematic than expected.

[148] A portmanteau between the words *Ritmi* (Rhythms) and Città (City).

You Can Stuff Your Punk Credentials:[149] **Trouble in Piazza Maggiore.**

When promotion for the *Ritmicittà* festival program was launched and *The Clash* were announced as headliners Carroli, Velena and the small Bolognese Anarcho-punk scene reacted with anger:

> *Instead of listening to our demands the administration was giving us entertainment. We considered that a patronising and disingenuous move. They wanted to make peace with the Movimento and, at the same time, lure us as mere consumers of punk music with a single big event. We had never asked for that. We would rather have practice rooms where we could develop our own music all year long; we demanded spaces where we could put on shows for us and invite other bands, socialize, be active and make our scene grow day after day. We considered that as a much better way of spending public money than booking big stars and putting on festivals, but the administration never listened to us. On top of that there was our criticism of the commodification of political punk, which in our eyes was embodied by The Clash and their CBS deal. Everything about our anger seemed righteous and justified.* (Carroli, 2017)

In fact, in the song *White Punks on Hope, RAF Punk*'s mentors *Crass* had already openly dismissed *The Clash* as the main example of a punk band who, in their view, had sold out to a major label to pursue profit.[150]

Anxious to share their outrage, Bologna's Anarcho-punks decided to produce a protest flyer against the show. They took advantage of the Anarchists facilities and managed to print around one thousand copies of a leaflet which denounced the administration's attempt at co-opting punk to 'gather votes' and 'ingratiate the young masses'.

[149] Quoted from *Crass,* 'White Punks on Hope' [Crass records, 1979]

[150] 'They said that we were trash/ Well the name is Crass, not Clash / They can stuff their punk credentials / Cause it's them that take the cash […]' from Crass*,* 'White Punks on Hope' [Crass records, 1979]

In the text, The Clash are dismissed as 'outdated', 'instruments of power' and 'fucking inoffensive'. The leaflet also criticises the mainstream media for trying to 'normalise' punk by analysing it and dissecting it with the help of sociologists and intellectuals. All Italian punks are encouraged to unite and start cooperating on DIY activities, avoiding any interference by the system and mass media. The idea for a collective fanzine which would cover the activities of bands like Crass or Crisis is launched. The leaflet is signed by five bands: RAF Punk, Uxidi, Anna Falkss, The 69 A.C.I.D. Punk and Puke Punk. According to Carroli, at the time of the events only three of these bands were actually producing music: RAF Punk, Uxidi and Anna Falkss.

On June 1st, way before show time, a group of Anarcho-punks led by Velena, Carroli and Stefano Cimato showed up in *Piazza Maggiore* and started giving out the flyers to the assembling Clash fans. Even after all the flyers had been distributed, the protesters continued approaching the gig goers to share the motivations behind their protest with them. However most of the Clash fans they approached were quite dumbfounded by the Bolognese punks and by their reasons:

> *The Clash fans were all so happy and excited to finally get the chance to see their favourite band that many of them were baffled by our protest. They could not understand how we could complain about The Clash playing for free in our city's main square. Nevertheless, I think we seeded something in a few people's minds on that day.* (Carroli, 2017)

The protest soon turned into a chance for a first meeting with punks from all over Italy, who had been attracted to Bologna by The Clash. As Carroli herself has admitted, the first threads of what would soon become the Italian Anarcho-punk network of the eighties and nineties were established on that occasion.
RAF Punk bassist and future *Nabat* singer Stefano 'Steno' Cimato has further elaborated on the motivations behind the protest:

> *It's not that we did not like The Clash. They were an outstanding band and we did listen to their music. They have been important for the punk scene. What we could*

> *not accept was the fact that the gig was held during the Communist Party recruiting campaign […] we felt that our background, our values and our music had been taken away from us.*[151]

On the morning after the show, according to Helena Velena, a small group of Anarcho-punks accidentally bumped into Joe Strummer while he was taking a walk in the city centre. Velena addressed The Clash front man directly: she questioned his band's major label signing, The Clash's participation to the *Ritmicittà* festival and their new sound, which she perceived as a drift towards commercialism. In Velena recollection of events, Strummer stopped to engage in conversation with the protesters. To Velena's criticism he replied that his band's new music was *'vibrating to the rhythm of the heart'*.[152]

The Future Is Unwritten[153]

The Clash concert in Piazza Maggiore was a huge success in terms of attendance and audience participation. To this day, there is a vast oral and written memorial history about it in the Italian rock community. According to most of these stories, the performance represented a rite of passage or a sort of initiation ceremony for many Bolognese and Italian punk and rock fans. Being a free event, the show was attended by many casual punters too, who have often claimed to have been converted to rock music fandom by that performance. As a testimony to the legendary status and continuing heritage of the show, Windopen guitarist Saverio Pasotti has stated:

> *The Clash show in Piazza Maggiore was a true starting point for so many musicians and young people in general: most of them were approaching that musical genre [punk] for the very first time. The square was packed and there were lots of teenagers. That concert left a mark on us [Windopen] too, and we were already*

[151] Stefano Cimato interview with author 14.11.2017

[152] *Mamma Dammi la Benza: Le Radici del Punk Italiano 1977 - 1982* (Angelo Rastelli, 2005)

[153] Popular Clash slogan that first appeared on the back cover of their 1982 album, *Combat Rock (*1982. CBS).

> *somehow experienced, imagine how much impact it must have had on young people. It really changed the lives of many* (Pasotti quoted in Rubini Tinti, 2003, p. 147)

Even in the *Clash milieu*, the concert is remembered as one of the highlights of the *London Calling* tour, as roadie Barry *'The Baker'* Auguste has reported in his blog:

> *It was one of the most intensely enthralling and ultimately rewarding shows the band ever played and they were truly thankful afterwards to the Bolognese fans for their patience and loyalty.* [154]

Episodes such as the late arrival of drummer Topper Headon, who was replaced for the very first songs of the set by the support band's drummer, have only augmented the legendary status of the show.

In the years after the Piazza Maggiore concert, the relationship between the city of Bologna and The Clash has proven to be a long lasting one. Every year, since Strummer's passing in 2002, Bologna hosts the *Joe Strummer Tribute*, a festival dedicated to the band's musical and cultural heritage. One of the city's main urban parks and concert sites has been recently renamed after Joe Strummer. Moreover, it can be argued that the efforts of the administrators have certainly produced long lasting results, reinforcing Bologna's status as a cultural hub and as a cutting-edge community in the Italian context. The success of the festival encouraged the *PCI* to include alternative music acts in the programs of its cultural events: throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, the *Feste dell'Unità* and the ARCI[155] clubs became regular venues for Italian and international indie bands. On the other hand, the festival signaled the presence of a new breed of punks which was ready to engage in dialectic confrontation with the administration. A generation of punks which did not feel represented by the bands to whom the administration had offered the prestigious platform of the *Ritmicittà* stage.

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[154] https://thebaker77.wordpress.com/2013/12/19/bologne-calling-joe-strummer-memorial-tribute-show/ Last accessed February 17, 2018.

[155] A.R.C.I. (*Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana*) is the recreation and entertainment organisation of the former *PCI*, now *Partito Democratico*.

Conclusions: the Subculturalisation of Italian Radicalism

The second wave of Bolognese punk rock voiced a demand for an autonomous space for identity definition and political action: a space which was safe from the influence and the control of the *Movimento*. For a small group of young people who had grown up in a context shaped by ideology, the Anarcho-punk approach represented an opportunity to still be involved in radical politics and in perspectives of social change, while adopting a brand-new identity which they perceived as not tainted by Italian social dynamics and ideological dualisms.

Bands like Gaznevada and the first wave of Bolognese punk often opted for sarcasm, obnoxiousness and across the board provocation to express their distance from the cultural habits of the *Movimento*. By de-politicising irony, one of the distinctive weapons of struggle of the 1977 Movement, first-wave punks were looking for a way out from a social climate in which ideology was dominating over all forms of cultural analysis and creative expression. At first glance, the second wave of Bolognese punk's look, musical taste and ideological orientation seemed completely at odds with the culture of the *Movimento* too. However, this new generation of punks immediately presented themselves as a 'new political subject', in pure *Movimento* style. Since their earliest public outings, the new punks directly addressed the 1977 Movement and local politicians: they criticised established cultural and social habits while asking for spaces of their own where they could express themselves without external interference. On the other hand, the first generation of Bolognese punk never directly confronted the Movement or the local government: they had imagined their escape from Italy's Long Seventies reality through provocation, sarcasm or via visions of a technological future which was utopian and dystopian at the same time. The second wave was interested in shaping their own future by acting against the political forces which were occupying their personal and collective space. The new punks wished to distinguish themselves from the 'old school' that – by the early eighties – they even started adopting the tag 'punX', with a final X, as their collective name. It was a self-conscious move to further underline their difference from the nihilism of the early scene and to 'de-anglicise' their appropriation of the punk subculture.

The fact that the demands of this new politically conscious youth were expressed through the articulations of the punk subculture was unprecedented in the Italian context. In terms of ideological references there were differences between the punks and the *Movimento*. While the *Movimento* was largely Marxist, the Crass-influenced punks had embraced Anarchism; if the Long Seventies radicals were often ambivalent towards armed struggle, the Anarcho-punks were resolutely pacifist. Moreover, the punks had brought on new causes to fight for, such as animal rights, yet their outspoken ideological stance still resonated with the historical tradition of Italian radical antagonism (which included Anarchism), as opposed to the nihilistic articulations of first-wave punk.

However, the Anarcho-punks reversed the perspective about subcultures which had been commonly applied by the *Movimento* popular culture analysts: while the Movement had been looking at subcultures through the lens of ideology, the punks began looking at ideology through the lens of a subculture. A popular journalistic argument claims that, for all its iconoclast fury, punk did not destroy rock and roll music but rather rejuvenated it and brought it back to some mythic golden age era. Similarly, it can be argued that Italian punk, particularly in its Anarcho-punk articulation, did not erase the previous generation's desire for political participation and social change, as some *Movimento* critics had argued. In fact, Anarcho-punk safeguarded and granted the survival of radical activism throughout the 80s and early 90s, albeit in different forms and in a smaller scale if compared to the Long Seventies.

While the early punk scene was trying to get rid of what they perceived as the Movement's oppressive ideological baggage in order to free their creative potential, the Anarcho-punk scene rejuvenated and preserved the urgency for political participation which was at the basis of Italian radicalism. They did it through a selective, subcultural approach, thus predating the future developments of Italian society: a future in which radical ideology would slowly but steadily slip out of mass consciousness and public debate, to be relegated to the fringes in which subcultures were commonly confined in twentieth-century post-capitalist societies. I describe this process as the 'Subculturisation of Radicalism' in post Long-Seventies Italy. It was a large-scale process in Italian society, progressively leading towards a de-politicisation of the country's public opinion after the Long Seventies.

The 'subculturisation' of political commitment throughout the eighties corresponded to the politicisation of a subculture (punk): the veterans of radical antagonism met the punks exactly at this juncture. This convergence happened – not without a number of problems and misunderstandings – in that marginal area of Italian society in which political activism had been gradually confined during the new decade. In these spaces, very often identifiable with the *Centri Sociali,* punks and the heirs – or the veterans – of the *Movimento* found themselves side by side, sometimes fighting the same battles. Nevertheless, the coexistence of punks and 'traditional' militants was not always peaceful.[156] However, in the eyes of most activists, punk was no longer the nihilistic and 'ambiguous' subculture of the late seventies.

Some young Italians started expressing their political ideas through subcultural styles such as anarcho and hardcore punk. For many the 'discovery' of radical ideology was a direct result of their initial exposure to subcultures: political literature was distributed at punk concerts and in the *Centri Sociali* were the 'PunX' gathered. Punk fanzines featured abundant political content, which was inextricably linked with the coverage of music. Concerts and festivals were often connected to political initiatives. During years in which the values of political engagement were rarely passed on to the younger generations by the agencies of mainstream Italian society (families, schools, mass media, communities), the Anarcho-punk underground became one of the main networks through which the flame of activism was kept alive. Nevertheless, the battle of the punks and the other Italian activists was now an uphill one.

By the end of the Long Seventies, the Italian radical front was not 'storming heaven' anymore, on the contrary: the new activists felt constantly under siege in a socio-political climate that was drifting towards the Silvio Berlusconi era. Talks of an upcoming revolution was, for the most part, abandoned: 'Resistance' – against new financial liberalism, policies of law and order, and the increasing popularity of neo-conservative values – became the new battle cry for the activists, who spent most of their energies trying to protect their social spaces from forceful evictions by the police. The subcultural articulations of Anarcho and hardcore punk became one of the weapons in this defensive strategy throughout the

[156] In some cases, the punks opted to have their own self managed *Centri Sociali* to avoid misunderstandings with the militants.

1980s. The PunX effectively contributed to the temporary survival of a tradition for political antagonism which had characterised Italy since its unification. The roots of this reconcilitation between punk and the history of Italian radicalism can be traced back to the protest staged in Bologna by Raf Punk and their friends and co-conspirators on June 1, 1980.

Chapter VIII

Bologna and the Others*:* Punk in Milan and Rome

Main Themes and Arguments

This chapter will provide an overview and analysis of the punk scenes of Milan and Rome between 1977 and 1980. For the purposes of this research, these two cities will serve as points of comparison for the Bolognese enactment of this subculture: they will also help us locate Bologna's punk scene within the larger Italian context. These cases have been selected also because they share a central role with Bologna in many of the defining historical events of the Long Seventies and in several significant socio-political experiences of the 1977 Movement. Moreover, Bologna, Milan and Rome were among the first Italian cities which, by the late seventies, had developed significant subcultural scenes which actively identified with punk. Given the specific context of the Long Seventies, the relationship between the punks and the *Movimento* was crucial in defining the characteristics of the scene in each city.

Even if they shared the above-mentioned similarities, these urban centres were – and still are – radically different communities and metropolitan conglomerations. These differences were deep-rooted and connected to Italy's uneven social, urban and economic development. Moreover, all three cities had radically dissimilar traditions in terms of civic engagement, public life and historical political affiliations. These unbalances and dissimilarities pre-dated the Long Seventies and, in some cases, the birth of the Italian state. In fact, Italy was not only polarised by the ideological contentions of the post-1968 period, but also by its long-standing economic, social and cultural disparities. These factors did shape the nature of the Movement in each context and, consequently, influenced the development of the local punk scenes as well. For these reasons, in our account of Milanese and Roman punk we will look at the above-mentioned conditions in both cities: in fact, in order to understand the characteristics of local punk scenes, our analysis should not be limited to interactions with the *Movimento* but should also look at the wider economic and socio-political context of these urban realities. From this perspective, attention will be given to the possible interactions between punk and the institutionalised political life of these two cities. In the previous chapter we have seen how the local government has

played a role in defining the Bolognese scene with its interventionist attitude: we will see if similar patterns can be identified in Milan and Rome too. We'll also look at how factors connected to the urban development of the two cities have influenced the social composition of the local punk scenes.

Dynamics of interaction between local scenes will be examined as well. As it has already been demonstrated, Bolognese punks entertained frequent collaborations with their peers from Milan: we will see how patterns of mutual influence between these two scenes were crucial to help define the features – and the fortunes – of Italian punk from its beginnings and throughout the 1980s. The Roman scene was often excluded from early Italian punk networking because of its geographical distance from other important punk cities such as Turin, Pordenone, Bologna and Milan. Early Rome punks also lacked allies in the local extra-parliamentary movement: this meant being cut off from the coverage of *Movimento* media agencies such as the *Radio Libere*[157] circuit which was vital for introducing punk to Italian radicals: punk had become part of the discourse and the audio-visual expression of the Bolognese *Movimento.* I will now consider how in Milan punk managed to establish its own niche both in the Movement and in the wider cultural milieu, influencing the aesthetics and the expressive language of both camps. In Rome though, the cultural voices of the extra-parliamentary scene did not show signs of interest in the local punk subculture.

These gradual differences were reflected in the relationship that the local music industries had with punk. In fact, Bologna and Milan produced the most important early festivals and the first Italian punk record releases from 1977. On the other hand, between 1977 and 1980, only one record was released by a band associated with the Roman punk scene.[158] The first festival which showcased Roman bands was held in the spring of 1980, while the Bolognese and Milanese scenes had already enjoyed several occasions to introduce themselves to their local audiences. Nevertheless, we will see how Roman punk managed to have some impact on the city's live music scene: the constant hunt by local bands for

[157] *Radio Libere* (the Italian indendent radio network) have been introduced in the fourth chapter of this work.

[158] Elettroshock (1978) *Asylum* [LP] Italy, Numero Uno

venues which would allow them to play, convinced the management of several clubs to reprise concert bookings after the live music crisis which had hit Italy in the 1970s.

Another element which crucially influenced the features of the local scenes was the relationship between punk and political violence. Compared to Bologna, Milan registered more episodes of intolerance and aggressiveness towards punk by *Movimento* militants. However, by the beginning of the 1980s, these incidents began to wane mostly because Milanese punk had embraced political activism and adopted a definite political stance.
In Rome, this process was complicated by the nature of the city's political polarisation.
In fact, due to the presence of significant street-level activism from neo-fascist groups, the everyday reality of the Roman *Movimento* was punctuated with violence: this led to a plethora of brutal clashes, some of which rank among the most tragic episodes of the Long Seventies.
The early Roman punks found themselves on the receiving end of long series of attacks too: many of these aggressions were enacted by Left Wing militants. The fact that in Rome these episodes continued until the early eighties, postponed the reconciliation between punk and the Movement which by that time period was already happening in other Italian punk cities. As a result, the local scene remained generally connected to early 1977 punk experiences for a longer time, if compared to other local appropriation of this subculture. Isolation from the Roman *Movimento* also meant estrangement from the national network of squats which was beginning to support punk in the early eighties. This did not help the diffusion of Roman hardcore punk on the national territory. Furthermore, the differences between the Roman and the Milanese attitude would cause several misunderstandings between the two punk communities which have been frequently reported by scene members from both cities.[159] One of the most notable characteristics of the Milanese scene was the presence of two bands – Kandeggina Gang and Clito – entirely composed by female members. Even if there were several female musicians in the line-ups of early punk bands in Bologna and Rome too, Milan was the only city that expressed two all-female bands. This was unprecedented for the Italian rock scene: the present chapter will introduce these two

[159] See Philopat (2006), Perciballi (2001)

groups and their relationship with the local political sphere, with particular regard to Feminism.

Looking at other local enactments of punk in Italy outside of Bologna is a necessary step in order to understand the peculiarity of the Bolognese case within the larger Italian approach to early punk. The results of my analysis of the punk scenes in Milan and Rome reinforces one of the initial arguments of the present work: during the Long Seventies, the approval and the support from the political sphere was crucial in order to guarantee the penetration of rock related subcultures into the Italian cultural fabric. In Bologna, punk managed to thrive and leave a mark in the city's cultural life because it found allies in the *Movimento*, in the wider local community and in the town government cultural operators. These conditions were only partially matched by Milan and were almost entirely absent in Rome. The first part of the chapter is dedicated to the beginnings of the punk scene in Milan, focusing mostly on those areas of the Milanese scene which had closer ties with the extra-parliamentary radical movement. It will also briefly introduce the Milanese socio-political context and Milan as a musical city in the seventies, before shifting the focus to the Roman scene. In the conclusions, the main characteristics of each local scene will be discussed with specific focus on affinities and dissimilarities with the Bolognese punk milieu.

Punk alla Scala[160]: Late Seventies Milan and its Early Punk Scene

A fundamental element of Italy's 'industrial triangle',[161] in the second post-war period Milan enjoyed a rapid economic growth, thus becoming the main engine of Italy's 1950-1960s economic boom as well as one of Europe's major industrial centres. Due to a constant flow of immigrants, mainly coming from the country's disadvantaged South, the city had seen its population growing steadily year after year. In 1951, a local census registered the presence of 1,274,187 inhabitants in the Milan area. By 1971, at the beginning of the Italy's first post-war economic crisis, Milan's population had reached 1,732,068 inhabitants, an historical peak for the city.[162] The rise of Milan as an economic powerhouse out of the post war economic boom and into more problematic phases during the subsequent decades has been analysed by British historian John Foot (2001).

In his contribution to Claudio Pescetelli's history of Italian punk, *Lo Stivale è Marcio* (Pescetelli, 2013), essayist John N. Martin argues that since the late 1950s Milan had already reached the status of a contemporary metropolis. As such, the city was affected by the conflicts which characterise advanced industrial systems. The above-mentioned conflicts revolved around work-related questions as well as environmental problems, the right to education, health, housing and even the management of free time. These issues, which Martin describes as '*socio-existential demands',* laid the grounds on which subcultural youth groups began to congregate in the city, from the 1950s until the late 1970s (Pescetelli, 2013, p. 138).

As one of the capitals of Italian hard-line Marxist politics, both at the institutional and extra-parliamentary level, Milan was also at the centre of Italy's post-1968 cycle of contention. Glezos, future key member of The Gags, one of the earliest Milanese punk groups,

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[160] *Punk alla Scala* is the title of a compilation dedicated to Milanese punk (2001,Hate). La Scala is the most important opera theathre in Milan.

[161] '*Il triangolo industriale'* is a journalistic expression which used to describe the geographical area comprised among the cities of Genova, Turin and Milan. This area was at the core of Italy's industrial development between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries.

[162] Source: https://www.tuttitalia.it/lombardia/18-milano/statistiche/censimenti-popolazione/ last access November 12, 2018.

remembers the political climate of mid-seventies Milan and his teenage years of political radicalism by tracing a comparison with Bologna.

> *Milan was not Bologna: Bologna was essentially a small town in comparison. Milan was a working class, heavy industry capital: a big city with all kinds of conflicts running through it. We were living an extremely tense political situation. Between 1976 and 1978, I remember going to school for only a couple of days a week because, on most mornings, I was going to political marches during which we clashed with the police on a regular basis. [Extra-parliamentary Marxist formation] Avanguardia Operaia was using high school kids as some sort of light infantry to start confrontations with the riot police. […] I've met many of those who would later become the very first Milanese punks during these riots.'*[163]

This highlights the crisis of political representation which struck a new generation of Italians growing-up in the trenches of the political conflict of the Long Seventies. These young militants began to perceive themselves not as the forbearers of a revolutionary process but as the *light infantry* in a struggle which belonged to previous age-groups. This predicament was confirmed by the chaotic proceedings of the 1976 edition of the *Parco Lambro Festival,*[164] which had exposed the weariness and the fragmentation growing within the ranks of the Milanese *Movimento*: this had left many militants discouraged and disenfranchised. The crisis of the extra-parliamentary front pushed some towards an even more intransigent approach, which often led to clandestine armed struggle. On a general level, the festival highlighted the insurgence of another typology of radicals who were ready to struggle for their personal and territorial needs and demands, rather than see themselves in a collective long-term revolutionary perspective (Bertante, 2005, p. 79).[165]

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[163] Glezos, interview with author 15.07.2018, from now on referenced as 'Glezos 2018', in the present text.

[164] *The Parco Lambro Festival,* was a yearly counter-cultural event organised in Milan (or in nearby towns) by the Re Nudo journal. It was one of the most attended and popular *Movimento* gatherings between 1971-1976.

[165] Insight on the rise of the *'nuovo proletariato giovanile'* (new sub-proletarian youth) as a political subject in the mid to late 1970s, and the consequent debate about this issue within the Italian Marxist left, has been provided in the fourth chapter of the present work.

Milan as a Musical Community

Even if most of the Italian music press was located in Rome[166], Milan was a crucial hub for the national and international music industries in Italy. As a place of industrial production and business relations, the city was the home of many of the most important Italian record companies like Dischi Ricordi, CGD and Durium. International companies Polydor, EMI and Warner Music had picked Milan as the base for their Italian divisions too. Smaller Milanese labels such as Cramps, Divergo and Ultima Spiaggia, had entered the music industry market more recently and were starting to make a name for themselves by releasing material from new Italian progressive rock underground acts such as Area and Ivan Cattaneo (Vita, 2019). Bologna, for all its creative energies, was not equipped with a similar music industry background: this aspect would prove to be crucial in the developments of the Bolognese punk scene and it has been demonstrated in the previous chapters.

Nevertheless, the emergence of conflicts running through Milan's social fabric soon reached the popular music area too. When the progressive rock/folk/jazz of the late sixties and seventies was elected as the soundtrack of choice for most of the post-68 radicals, concert venues often became battlefields in which the cultural demands of the *Movimento* clashed with the live music industry. Since the June 5, 1971 riots on the occasion of the Led Zeppelin show at Teatro Vigorelli the Milanese activists had become systematic enforcers of *Autoriduzion*e practice at concerts (Rossi, 2014).

This tense climate extended beyond the realm of pop-rock to reach other far more institutional musical genres too, as shown by the incidents of December 7, 1976. On that date, hundreds of local *Circoli del Proletariato* militants were demonstrating outside the *Alla Scala* opera theatre on the night of its seasonal debut (*La Prima*), a very important yearly event for the city. The *Circoli* were protesting the display of luxury and wealth which the Milanese bourgeoisie was putting on during a time of working class struggles and economic crisis. Furthermore, punters would pay for tickets with a minimum price of one

[166] The only significant exception was Milan-based hard-line prog/jazz rock monthly *Gong*. The magazine was born from the political and musical differences within the editorial board of another magazine called Muzak, which was based in Rome. In 1974, the Milanese section of Muzak's editorial board decided to leave to issue their own magazine.

hundred thousand lire to attend *La Prima*: this fact alone was perceived as another example of how the bourgeoisie was trying to exclude the working classes from high culture and important social events. The situation soon escalated to a full-blown battle between the protesters and more than 5,000 riot policemen which led to 250 arrests and 21 heavy injuries, thus preventing *La Prima* from taking place (Pescetelli, 2013). Since *La Prima* was covered by national press and TV, one of the protesters' goals was to attract media attention: in fact, the event made a huge impression on Italian public opinion and it reaffirmed the widespread sensation that no area of Italian society was excluded from the violent ideological conflicts of the time. In this climate, the very early the Milanese punk scene was taking shape.

Santa Marta

The *Centro Sociale Santa Marta* was a 18th century building located in the city centre. Since 1974 it had been occupied by various collective of political activists and artists. According to Claudio Pescetelli, '*in Santa Marta old and new forms of Milanese political antagonism were coexisting but not without problems*' (Pescetelli, 2013, p. 178).

Mainly, the squatted building was shared by *Avanguardia Operaia*, one of the most hard-line Marxist groups of the *Area dell'Autonomia*, and by various artist and creative collectives. Popular avant-garde theatre actor and political activist Dario Fo had established the headquarters of his *Circolo La Comune* association there. Besides the political forums, conferences and seminars, *Santa Marta* provided regular school courses for children and adults, art and design laboratories and a gym. Through *Circolo La Comune*, the centre also offered dance, theatre and photography courses. Conferences, seminars and symposiums about politics, art and civil rights were held on a regular basis. All activities were free of charge and based on voluntary work.

The *Santa Marta* music schools were attracting many local aspiring musicians too. Some of the best known Italian progressive rock musicians were holding free music courses: these included Demetrio Stratos, vocalist for jazz/rock ensemble Area and Mauro Pagani, the violinist for prominent progressive band Premiata Forneria Marconi. Furthermore, the *Santa Marta* rehearsal rooms were attended by popular cutting-edge rockers Eugenio Finardi and Alberto Camerini. Cramps Records artist Ivan Cattaneo was among the *Santa Marta habitués* as well (Pescetelli, 2013, pp. 178-179). The centre soon became the

Milanese headquarters for local musicians who identified with the struggles of the *Movimento*. When the first news about UK punk reached *Santa Marta* though, the reactions were far from enthusiastic. At the time of his first encounter with punk, Glezos was a teenage student of the *Santa Marta* music schools:

> *I was attending Mauro Pagani's music courses at Santa Marta when I first heard the Sex Pistols on Radio Milano Centrale*[167] *in December 1976. DJ Briano Livares, who claimed to have just returned from London, introduced them by dismissing the new punk thing, saying that the only consolation about the whole affair resided in the fact that nobody will remember about this ridiculous musical trend in a few months. Before playing Anarchy in The UK he added: 'one can only wonder what kind of political education someone who calls himself Johnny Rotten might have'. Nevertheless, as soon as the song started I was blown away. From then on, I only wanted to know about punk: when I first asked about the Sex Pistols in record shops though, I only got laughs from the clerks. I learned that the first UK punk records were not yet distributed in Italy and if you wanted to order them as imports you had to spend a lot of money and endure the derision of shop assistants on top of that. I tried to talk to Mauro Pagani about punk but he told me: 'Yes, I have some friends in the UK who have told me about it: if you ever dare to make that kind of music here I will kick you out from the course immediately!'*.(Glezos, 2018)

In Glezos recollections, the condemning tone of the *Radio Milano Centrale* DJ, the sarcasm of the record clerks and Pagani's outspoken threat were the first signs of an intolerant attitude towards punk by the Milanese musical and political scene which would manifest itself in the following two years.

Saturday Night's Alright for Fighting

On October 4, 1977, a crowd of almost 4,000 members of *Avanguardia Operaia* and other affiliated radical Marxist groups marched through Milan's centre: the protesters wanted to prevent a concert announced by self-proclaimed local punk band Decibel from taking place.

[167] *Radio Milano Centrale* was a home-based *Radio Libera* founded in 1975 by a collective led by *Corriere della Sera* music journalist, and PCI member - Mario Luzzato Fegiz.

The venue, a disco called *Piccola Broadway*, was located in *Corso Buenos Aires*, one of the city's main streets: the activists blocked the whole area and picketed club's entrance, making sure no one could enter the club. To avoid trouble the venue shut its doors and canceled the show immediately. The small audience who had gathered to witness the first concert by a Milanese punk band was energetically deterred by the protesters and quickly left the area. *Decibel* did not even show up: singer Enrico Ruggeri has declared that the band was never booked to play at Piccola Broadway. In Malcolm McLaren style, Decibel just wanted to pull a prank on the audience, the club and the protesters. Their aim was to stir controversy and obtain visibility for their name (Mazzi and Cantonetti, 1992, p. 6). In the days before the event, the members of Decibel had been wild posting self-made flyers in which they advertised the fake event as a 'punk rock concert'. The Marxist militants, who were largely persuaded of the Fascist nature of punk – mainly from its coverage by Italian media – decided to show up *en masse* to express their firm opposition to this new and – in their eyes – despicable musical subculture. On that same night and on the following day, the debate about punk occupied the frequencies of *Radio Popolare*, the most important *radio libera* of the Milanese *Movimento*. The *Movimento* crowd appeared divided on the subject. Some militants embraced the *Avanguardia Operaia* line. Other commentators though, while still criticising punk for its ideological ambiguity, argued that punk should be considered as a form of suburban protest that needed to be addressed and understood, to prevent the always looming risk of right-wing appropriation (Pescetelli, 2013, pp. 160-161). In any case, the *Piccola Broadway* incident showed how the relationship between the nascent punk scene and the local *Movimento* was extremely problematic from the outset. In fact, episodes of physical and verbal assaults towards punks multiplied in the following months. According to Glezos, he avoided physical attacks only because of his personal history as an activist and as a member of a well-known Milanese anti-fascist family:

> *The risk of getting assaulted and beaten up because of the way we looked was always looming. I was spared only because I had many friends within the Movimento, due to my history of political activism. Furthermore, my uncle had been part of the Communist resistance during Second World War and was a well-known Italian Communist Party member*. (Glezos, 2018)

Sabatok Folle

On October 16 and 17, 1978, one year after the Decibel episode, the first international punk concerts finally took place in Milan: London band Adam & The Ants played in a venue called *Cineteatro* for two consecutive nights. The concerts, which managed to go under the radar of the *Autonomi*, left a huge impression on a small crowd of young local punks and influenced the musical aesthetics of a significant part of the Milanese scene. Between late 1977 and 1978, bands like Clito, TV Vampire (later known as The Gags), Borstal Dampers (later known as Mittageisen), X-Rated, and Jumpers had all started their musical activities. To avoid controversies, all these groups were keeping themselves at safety distance from the *Movimento* hangouts, even if some individual members were still involved in forms of left- wing political activism.

However, the Milanese punks could count on an important ally within the ranks of the *Movimento*. *Radio Popolare* DJ Francesco D'Abramo actively championed punk during his show. He soon started working on a festival which would include most of the local punk bands.

Thanks to his connections, D'Abramo secured the availability of the *Palazzina Liberty*, a Milan venue which was regularly hosting *Movimento* and *Radio Popolare* related events: the first Italian punk rock festival, *Sabatok Folle* (*Crazy Saturday*), was scheduled there for December 9, 1978. The festival's line-up included many local bands but also featured out of town guests, testifying that contacts between Milan and other local punk scenes had been already established by that point. The guests were Windopen from Bologna and two problematically named bands from Pordenone: Tampax and HitlerSS. Both bands came from the Friuli Venezia-Giulia region, an area which was quite removed from the conflictual political dynamics of a metropolis like Milan. HitlerSS have repeatedly denied any affiliation with Nazism and claimed that their only intention was to provoke and instigate a reaction from audiences by adopting the most irritating and offensive name they could think of (Rubini, 2017). On the *Sabatok Folle* poster though, HitlerSS were announced as 'Hits' in order to avoid any chances for animosity caused by their highly controversial band name.

Furthermore, fearing that the obnoxious antics of the Pordenone bands might cause a violent reaction from the crowd, the organisers decided to move the performances by

Tampax and 'Hits' from the evening program to the afternoon, hoping that less people would be in attendance. These cautionary measures did not manage to prevent some violent accidents, which partially compromised the festival's proceedings. In fact, militants from an extra parliamentary group called *Violenza Proletaria* (*Proletarian Violence*) picketed the venue's entrance and physically attacked anyone who was identifiable as a punk. Some band members had to be escorted inside the *Palazzina Liberty* by the organisers, so that they could reach the stage and perform. The 'Hits' were repeatedly attacked both inside and outside the venue. One member of the band, who had been accused of wearing a German cross of war, had to be followed by an improvised security team for the entire stay. Even militant feminist band Clito were attacked and robbed on their way out of the venue, because, in the eyes of the *Violenza Proletaria* militants, all punks were Neo-Nazis (Dainese, 2011, p. 24). The chaos also jeopardised many live performances to the point that only six acts out of the eleven which had been originally scheduled managed to play their sets: Windopen, Borstal Dampers, Hits, Tampax, Beggar's Banquet and Clito. The festival ended with a huge debate between the audience and TV Vampire guitarist Glezos about how to deal with a stage invader who had taken control of the band's drum kit (Pescetelli, 2012, pp. 153-154).

Despite – or because of – the violence and the chaos which ruled over the entire day, the *Sabatok Folle* festival was an important event for the Italian punk rock scene. It was the first significant showcase for Italian punk and it saw the live debut of the first all-female punk rock band, Clito. The festival also cemented the connections between punks from Milan, Pordenone and Bologna: in the following months the cooperation between these three centers would lead to several important events for the Italian punk scene. For example, Bolognese punks Laura Carroli and Jumpy Velena, who attended *Sabatok Folle*, went on to organise a similar festival in Bologna in the first months of 1979, inviting Milan band Mittageisen (formerly Borstal Dampers) as well as Tampax and HitlerSS. *Sabatok Folle* was the first event to gather punks from different Italian cities: the threads of a punk network which could establish interconnections without necessarily going through the *Movimento* were arguably established – or reinforced – on that day.

Kaos Rock

While in Bologna the experiments of the *Area Creativa* had quite successfully popularised the concept that music and art could be integrated in the political struggle, in Milan these ideas found stronger opposition within the leftist extra-parliamentary area. The Milanese *Movimento* was predominantly leaning towards workerist positions inspired by *Autonomia Operaia* which had little sympathy for the artistic tendencies of certain fringes of the *Movimento del 77.* These differences were particularly evident where the two branches of the Movement were sharing spaces, as in the case of the *Santa Marta* centre.

Even before punk, the hard-line Marxist formations operating within *Santa Marta* were barely tolerating the musical activities of the centre. Contempt for the distraction from real revolutionary objectives that popular music represented was often voiced by members of the centre. According to Glezos, during one assembly *Avanguardia Operaia* member and Santa Marta activist Gianni Muciaccia declared: *'We don't give a damn about music here at Santa Marta: we only care about the sound documents of working-class struggles'* (Muciaccia quoted by Glezos 2018). Muciaccia was one of the activists who had participated in the onstage 'proletarian trial' of folk singer Francesco De Gregori on April 2, 1975.[168] However, by the end of 1978, Muciaccia had changed his mind about the relationship between music and politics: inspired by punk, he decided to form his own band, Kaos Rock. Muciaccia's fast change of tune can perhaps be interpreted as an early attempt by the Milanese *Movimento* at recapturing dialogue with those new sub-proletarian masses which seemed to have lost interest in previous forms of struggle.

In a 1980 interview for a RAI TV special about the new local rock scene, while introducing the punk fanzines produced within Santa Marta[169], Muciaccia defined rock music as *'the*

[168] Details about this episode and other *Autoriduzioni* actions have been provided in the fourth chapter of this research work.

[169] One of the two fanzines was called '*Travolgeremo Tutto'* (We're Going To Run Over Everything). Produced in the *Santa Marta*, the fanzine was expressing the new 'rock oriented' line of the centre, championing the rights of young musicians.

true expression of youth culture'. He also described Santa Marta as a meeting point and a creative incubator for all the young Milanese bands[170].

At the end of 1979, Kaos Rock were noticed by Cramps records owner Gianni Sassi, who booked them for the Milan's Rock 80 live music festival held on February 6, 1980. The festival was followed by the release of a compilation album[171] featuring studio tracks by 7 new rock bands from the Cramps catalogue. The forefathers of Bolognese *Rock Demenziale*, Skiantos, participated with one track only, while each one of the other bands contributed with two songs which would later also be released as individual singles. Two bands came from Bologna (Skiantos and Windopen), one band came from Genova and four groups represented the Milanese scene: Kaos Rock, Take Four Doses, early scene movers X-Rated and the first all-female punk band to release a record, Kandeggina Gang.

Kandeggina Gang

Like Kaos Rock, Kandeggina Gang were a product of the *Santa Marta* centre. 17 years old Giovanna Coletti, Gianni Muciaccia's girlfriend at the time, was trying to form a band with other girls to play punk rock. In Autumn 1979, she teamed up with another teenager, 15 years old Marghie Gianni on bass, and two other girls named Elena and Daniela[172] on guitar and drums. Coletti adopted the punk name of Jo Squillo.[173] The band name, Kandeggina Gang[174], was chosen by Coletti because it represented the band's intention of disposing with the Italian pop rock tradition, which was seen as mellifluous and cheesy (Dainese, 2011, p. 36).

Kandeggina Gang played Ramones influenced punk-pop with very direct lyrics, addressing issues pertaining to teenage life and feminism. The band's live debut took place in December 1979 at the Cinema Cristallo venue, in the context of a festival initiative in support of recently arrested Communist militants. They played the only song they had

[170] *Milan New Rock Special* (1980) [TV programme] Gianni Sassi and Gianni Muciaccia interview RAI TV https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1e-_6Jyd-hI (last access, September 2018)

[171] Various Artists (1980) *Rock 80* [LP] Italy, Cramps

[172] Surnames not found.

[173] In Italian slang the word *'squillo'* means 'call girl'.

[174] *Candeggina* (normally spelled with a 'C' instead of 'K') translates as 'bleach' in English.

written so far, *Orrore* (Horror). Here follows a sample of the lyrics: *'Che lavaggio del cervello/tu non pensi che al tuo uccello/che lavaggio secolare/tu non pensi che a scopare'*[175] which can be translated as *'What a brainwash/you are obsessed with your penis/what an age-old brainwash/you only think about fucking'*. In straightforward teenage-slang terms, the song was channeling the feminist critique of the hyper-sexualisation of the female persona which characterised Italian traditional culture. During another performance, held on March 8, 1980, in Milan central square, Piazza Duomo, Squillo would shock the audience by hurling Tampax tampons at the crowd, while Kandeggina Gang were playing a new unreleased song called *Violentami* (*Rape Me*). Bassist Marghie Gianni recalled the event in a 2007 interview for Italian newspaper's Liberazione:

> *The feminists got really angry at us. On the other hand, the journalists and the photo reporters got all excited. We were not prepared for this and maybe some of us were not totally convinced by her (Jo Squillo's) antics. We thought she should have told us about her intentions before the show.* (Gianni quoted in Helaberarda, 2013)

Lista Rock

In early June 1980, Italy was facing a round of local administrative elections. Muciaccia and The Santa Marta Centre decided to participate by forming an electoral roll called *Lista Rock* (Rock List) which presented members of the Milanese punk scene as candidates.

Muciaccia's electoral venture had an international predecessor in the punk movement: in 1979, the lead singer for Californian punk band Dead Kennedys had been running for mayor in San Francisco. Biafra did not win but he managed to rank third on a field of ten candidates. It has not been possible to establish if Biafra's experience had been directly inspiring Milan's *Lista Rock*: nevertheless, the Californian singer had set a surprisingly successful precedent for a punk candidate in electoral races. *Lista Rock* had an ambitious program which was aimed at young people who were not interested in politics or had become disaffected with forms of active participation to social change in the wake of the failures of the *Movimento*. Amongst other demands, *Lista Rock* was asking for free public spaces to be made available for the youth to congregate and make music: in this way, *Lista*

[175] Kandeggina Gang (1980) *'Sono Cattiva/Orrore'* [7" single] Italy, Cramps.

Rock claimed, the Milanese youth might be better equipped to resist the hard drug epidemic which had been striking Italy since the late seventies. One of the punk candidates in the *Lista Rock* was Giovanna Coletti/Jo Squillo. However, *Lista Rock* did not manage to obtain any seats in Milan's city council.

Nevertheless, the electoral campaign brought further media exposure for Kandeggina Gang: the band were featured in a RAI TV special called *Rock e Metropoli* on May 5, 1980. Under a banner which says 'Free Tampax', the band can be seen playing their song *Sono Cattiva* (*I'm Evil*) for a few seconds. Their performance is followed by a short interview with Coletti.

Nevertheless, Jo Squillo's involvement with the political initiative was not met with enthusiasm by her bandmates, as Marghie Gianni declared in an interview for *Re Nudo*.

> *Giovanna [Coletti], Kaos Rock and many other people at Santa Marta spoke a language that we did not understand…we did not know anything about politics…Elections were on their way with this famous Lista Rock. Our punk friends were telling us that rock was old hat, just as well as that way of dealing with politics'* (Gianni quoted in Cunteri, 1980, p. 14)

The other members of Kandeggina Gang were also trying to get away from their lead singer's commanding personality: *'Giovanna was taking all the decisions, she had no team spirit, she had a strong personality, she had a project in her head but she did not share it with us at all. […] We felt subdued by the way she acted'* (Gianni quoted in Helaberarda, 2013). Furthermore, the band – minus Coletti - wanted to break free from Muciaccia and the Kaos Rock/*Santa Marta* circle, who were keeping strict creative – as well as managerial – control over them, as Marghie Gianni confessed in her *Re Nudo* interview.[176] Finally, Kandeggina Gang parted ways with Coletti in June 1980. The new era of the band would prove to be very short lived, as Kandeggina Gang split up only one year later. In 1981, Jo Squillo would

[176] See: Cunteri, L. 'Kandeggina Gang: o Tutto o Tutto, *Re Nudo*, issue 88, June 1980, pp. 14-15

debut as a solo act, managed by Gianni Muciaccia. Some of the songs from her debut album, including *Violentami*, were taken from Kandeggina Gang's unrecorded material.[177].

Muciaccia's *Lista Rock* was not the only attempt at using popular music – and punk - as an electoral weapon during the 1980 administrative elections. As the events described in the previous chapter demonstrate, Bologna's *Ritmicittà* festival was a deliberate effort by the city's administration to re-establish dialogue with its young radical population after many years of tense confrontation. In Bologna's case, the effort was not produced by an offshoot of the *Movimento* but by the public administration of the city. Nonetheless, both ventures were openly criticised by the parts of the local punk scene.

Some of the sense of uneasiness which the members of Kandeggina Gang were feeling towards Muciaccia's political manipulation of their band was mirrored by the protest against *Ritmicittà* which the Bolognese neo-anarchists had been carrying out: both these responses can be seen as forms of intolerance for traditional politics and as the first signs of a desire for a new season of radical ideological engagement, which would later be articulated by the Anarcho-punk underground in Milan and in Bologna. Many of the members of the Santa Marta punk scene would soon regroup in another Milanese squat, *Virus*, which would become one of the reference points for the Italian Anarcho-punk network (Pescetelli, 2012, p. 182).

Furthermore, many Milanese punks had attended the Clash concert in Bologna and some of them were engaged by the protesters.[178] As a consequence, the first connections of the future Anarcho-punk network were established between Bologna and Milan: in both cities there had been cases of appropriation of punk attempted by pre-existent and long-established political agencies. In both cities, a second wave of punks which claimed an autonomous space for political action would soon emerge. Under this perspective, the Italian Anarcho-punk network can be viewed as a reaction against the perceived commodification of first-wave punk, not only as a music subculture but also as political vehicle at local level.

[177] Jo Squillo Eletrix (1981) *Girl Senza Paura [LP]* Italy, Polydor

[178] Future Virus activist Marco Philopat has reported about this event on several occasions. See: Philopat 2006 and 2010.

Clito

The aforementioned desire for political autonomy was pre-dated by another Milanese all female punk band. Formed in late 1977, Clito were initially the brainchild of Luisa Vecchiet, a former hippie and a Feminist who, on her return from an extended trip to the American continent, was determined to do something 'with and for women' (Vecchiet quoted in Dainese, 2011, p. 19). She began developing the idea of an all-female rock band even if she had no musical training: *'I was becoming angrier and angrier because I was surrounded by many musician friends but they were all invariably male. Even at the music festivals the bands were all made by men'* (ibid.). Vecchiet joined forces with Eliana Gramegna, bass player for early Milanese punk band Aedi, and with Daniela Tosi, a female guitarist she had heard playing during a break in a rehearsal session by a band they were both friends with. Vecchiet decided to take up saxophone as her own instrument: she would soon adopt the punk name of Elettra Sax. The band's line-up was augmented by Gina Mandola, an Italo-American woman who was also a DJ for *Radio Popolare*. In her radio show, Gina was championing American and British punk rock and she quickly transmitted her passion for punk to her bandmates. In Clito, she took on vocal duties with the punk name of Ruby Scass. Mandola and Tosi, who had adopted the name of Olivia Jean Tonic, were living together in a Separatist Feminist commune which also hosted the band's first rehearsal room. In Jessica Dainese's book *Le Ragazze Del Rock*, Vecchiet explains the reasons why she actively embraced punk and spoke about what the subculture meant for Clito as feminists:

> *Punk was the first musical movement I identified with. Punk made me feel like I could be a protagonist, especially thanks to the important role that women were playing in it. […] We can definitely say that we [Clito] were punks for our rebellious attitude and desire to play at all costs, even if we were not musically proficient, at least in the beginning. For us there were also other issues that came with it: Feminism, Separatism and the war at the inherent sexism of the Italian rock scene. Punk has been important for empowering women. […] I felt like I had so many things to say, do and claim. In particular, I wanted to show that even Italian women could play rock.* (Vecchiet quoted in Dainese, 2011 p. 23)

Still in need of a permanent drummer, Clito made their live debut in December 1978, at the *Sabatok Folle* festival. A female friend from the Via Lanzone commune was recruited as a drummer for the occasion.

> *It was an explosion of rage, rather than a concert. We had been rehearsing for a while, but without a drummer our line-up was not complete and we only had one song…But women absolutely had to get on that stage and it had to be us. It was a political action. We were feminists ... PUNK feminists! At the show other musicians told us: you need to learn how to play but you sure are tough!* (Ibid., p. 24)

On that occasion, Clito would experience some of the intolerance that was often directed at punks by members of the *Movimento*.

> *As we were leaving the Palazzina Liberty we were attacked by a bunch of so-called leftist militants who accused us of being fascists simply because we were punks […] They tried to beat us up and they stole one rare Patti Smith record from our singer. We had to run in order to avoid further trouble. This was our first punk concert in Milan…and of course the orthodox Communists misunderstood it.* (Ibid.)

In Spring 1979, soon after they had found a permanent drummer, Clito were approached by Cramps Records for a contract that should have tied them to Gianni Sassi's label from one to five years. The band refused the proposal. Cramps would later sign Kandeggina Gang instead. However, Clito did not want to be put against the other all-female band of the Milanese scene.

> *At the time, some articles came out on the music press which were implying that there was a rivalry between Clito and Kandeggina Gang, but actually we were glad to no longer be alone. We hoped that people would come and see us for our music and not because of the 'freakish' novelty factor which was connected to us being the only female punk band.* (Ibid. p. 26)

Nevertheless, Vecchiet did express her perplexities about the Santa Marta circuit which had spawned Kandeggina Gang and, in her views, was excising control over the teenage band:

> *They [Kandeggina Gang] were alright, apart from her [Jo Squillo], who we saw as an opportunist. We did not like her because she had this man behind her, this Gianni Muciaccia…There was no man behind us [Clito], we were doing everything by ourselves. On the contrary, they had an entire Centro Sociale [squat] full of men to support them…According to some rumours they didn't even play on their own record, but I can't confirm that*.(Ibid.)

Some of Vecchiet's criticism was in fact reinforced by the members of Kandeggina Gang themselves in the course of a 1980 *Re Nudo* interview with the band, released soon after Jo Squillo had left the group.[179]

After playing the *Ritmicittà* Festival in Bologna in 1980, Clito contacted Italian Records, thus establishing another link between the Bolognese and Milanese punk scenes.

> *In Bologna, which in those years was very active in music and counterculture just like Milan, there was a record company which did not seem interested in bogus contracts and it was producing many interesting groups too. It was Italian Records. There we found competent people, who stood behind the band without putting pressure on us.* (Vecchiet quoted in Dainese, 2011, p. 27)

Indeed, Clito had developed a sound which was quite removed from the classic punk style of many contemporary Milanese acts. Clito found inspiration in punk rock as well as in the New York No Wave scene or in acts as diverse as X-Ray Spex, Essential Logic, Devo, Raincoats, Laurie Anderson and Lounge Lizards: on the grounds of these musical influences, Clito seemed perfectly aligned with the sound of Italian Records bands such as Confusional Quartet and Gaznevada. Furthermore, Vecchiet's quote suggests that with its relaxed pace,

[179] Cunteri, L. 'Kandeggina Gang: o Tutto o Tutto', *Re Nudo*, issue 88, June 1980, pp. 14-15

history of creative freedom and distance from the hub of Italy's music industry, Bologna proved to be a safer space than Milan, especially for the first recording session of an all-female band who was trying to combine Feminism with punk. Furthermore, the fact that a Milanese band had chosen Bologna to record their debut single, momentarily reverted the process which saw Bolognese acts move regularly turn to Milan to find a more professional supporting structure for their career, as it had recently happened with Skiantos signing for Cramps Records. This proved that, at least initially, the effort made by Italian Records manager Oderso Rubini to create a professional business structure had been successful, even if Bologna never fully turned into the creative industry city envisioned by the some organisers of the *Ritmicittà* festival.

Unfortunately, the single which Clito were supposed to release for Italian Records was not released at the time due to the band's sudden break-up in June 1981.[180] Vecchiet and Mandola were drifting towards an experimental multimedia art approach, while Mannite, Tosi and Gramegna insisted on perfecting the bands' instrumental prowess. These divisions proved to be irreconcilable and brought the first Italian all female punk band to its end.

The song that was going to appear on the A side of Clito's debut single *Se La Vita è Faticosa* (*If Life is Hard*), describes a contemporary urban female condition caught between traditional Italian notions of romantic love and the heroin epidemic of the late seventies.

> *Se la vita è faticosa/non ti basterà una rosa/come cantano i poeti/ a far bella ogni cosa/ma se vuoi morir contenta/due bustine di eroina…*[181]

Which can be translated as:

> *If life is hard/a rose won't be enough/to make everything nice/contrary to what poets sing. If you want to die happy/shoot two doses of heroin in your veins instead.*

[180] The two songs Clito had recorded on that occasion, 'Se la Vita è Faticosa' and 'Giangol' officially resurfaced only in 2013, on the Italian Records 7" single Collection published by the Spittle label.

[181] Various Artists (2013) *Italian Records - The Singles 7'' Collection* (1980-1984) [CD], Italy, Spittle

The early Italian punk scene was way more mixed in terms of gender representation than any other music influenced Italian subcultural milieu, be it past or contemporary. Women were represented in the Roman and Bolognese scene as well, both as musician and insiders, but the Milanese punk scene was the only one to have two bands who were entirely made of female members.

Both classified as punk, Clito and Kandeggina Gang were actually very different bands. Even if their band name had been suggested by their male friend and male Area singer Demetrio Stratos[182], Clito were the only early Italian punk band who tried to consciously incorporate their pre-punk feminist militancy into their new subcultural identity. They were also still integrated in the Milanese feminist radical milieu and, differently from what happened to other female punks in Bologna, they were not ostracised by their comrades, probably thanks to their personal connections within the Movement.

The parallel histories of these all-female bands are indicative of two different approaches to punk. In the case of Kandeggina Gang and the Santa Marta groups, we are presented with a conscious attempt at exploiting punk as a vehicle for a pre-existing agenda, as the sudden conversion to punk by Muciaccia combined with his venture at a political career with the *Lista Rock* confirm[183]. In the case of Clito, punk was a platform and a language in which to express identities and desires which were still difficult to accommodate at any level of Italian society. As it has been demonstrated, Clito found adversities in the music industry as well as in the *Movimento*. Their uncompromising approach and their attention to issues of control over their own image and music would later inspire bands such as R.A.F. Punk and all female hardcore group Antigenesi. It can be argued that Clito have been anticipating the radical approach of the Anarcho-punk scene: they certainly have highlighted the contradictions arising from the relationship between a sexist music business and the expectations of many female musicians who were inspired by the promise of free expression which punk was bringing.

[182] The name Clito first appeared in the liner notes of the 1978 area album *Gli Dei Se ne Vanno, Gli Arrabbiati Restano* (Cramps, 1978), as the collective name for the female backing vocalists on the song *Vodka Cola.*

[183] Muciaccia would later associate himself with the Milanese Italian Socialist Party (PSI) which was on the rise in the eighties as a neo-liberal leftist alternative to the Communist Party.

The Sound of the Suburbs: Punk in Rome

The influence of questions of locality, economy and politics on the formation of subcultural groups is particularly evident when looking at the early appropriation of punk in Rome.

The issues which influenced the social composition of the early Roman scene can be grouped under four main categories:

1) Urban settlement of the city and nature of the local economy;
2) Characteristics of the Roman *Movimento* and attitude towards punk;
3) General isolation of the Roman scene in the national panorama;
4) Relationship with the music industry.

In this section, these issues will be presented and analysed in order to understand the specific place of the Roman scene within the landscape of early Italian punk.

Urban Settlement and Local Economy

Roman punk was largely a suburban phenomenon. This is enough to differentiate the Roman scene from the ones in Milan and Bologna. In fact, even if some of their members were coming from suburban areas, most of the activities of the Bolognese and Milanese scenes were taking place in the central areas of both cities. On the other hand, Roman punk was often coming from the city's most impoverished quarters (Pescetelli, 2013). This peculiar aspect finds its origins in the history of the city's urban development and economic fabric.

Since its reinstatement as the nation's capital city, Rome had seen two periods of continued and extensive urban growth and change: the first one would extend from 1871 until the beginning of the Second World War, with its peak coinciding with the *Ventennio Fascista*. During the Fascist regime, the poor areas of the centre which surrounded the Vatican City and the Roman Forum, were demolished to build new, larger roads such as *Via Della Conciliazione*. The population of these quarters were deported *en masse* to the newborn peripheral area of *Primavalle* and given very modest housing commonly described as *Case Minime.*[184] The same process was applied to the area which is now surrounding *Piazza Venezia*, the regime's gathering square, where *Il Duce* would address crowds and make

[184] '*Minimal Standard Houses*' or, as a reference to the overcrowded living conditions, *Shanghai*

public speeches. Progressively, large parts of the city's centre, whose poor population were considered prone to delinquency and particularly sensitive to Socialist ideals, were run down to accommodate the architecture of the Fascist regime capital: this implied moving several thousand inhabitants to suburban rural areas which became known as *Borgate Romane*, a term that soon became synonymous with Rome's most socially and economically disadvantaged areas. These suburbs were hastily built and were lacking basic services, including public transport and efficient roads leading to the centre. This created vast neighborhoods whose populace were estranged from the life of the nation's capital. Moreover, the social housing plans of the local government did not manage to satisfy the needs of numerous citizens of the *Borgate*: as a result, the inhabitants started building houses and shacks by themselves, often times without having obtained lawful authorisation: as a result, large areas within the *Borgate* rapidly turned into actual slums. Social relations and everyday life in the *Borgate* were characterised by alienation and degradation: the first *Borgatari*[185] were not farmers and their livelihood used to depend on the small jobs and businesses which they once ran in Rome's historical centre. The destruction of this connective tissue caused unemployment and social fragmentation. At the same time, there was another flow of migration which had started gathering on the outskirts of town. These new immigrants were coming from the south but also from poor northern regions such as Veneto. Most of them never reached central Rome and they settled in the *Borgate*[186], thus augmenting the over-population of these disenfranchised areas (Pescetelli, 2013, pp. 227-229).

In the post-war period, the Roman periphery faced another period of – mostly uncontrolled – expansion. Hoping for better living conditions and job opportunities, hundreds of thousands of Italians were fleeing the areas which had been most severely hit by the war to move nearer to the capital city. This determined not only a further growth of the *Borgate* but also the birth of more slums and bidonvilles all around Rome, as the local government could not accommodate all those who filed for public housing. Only between the end of the seventies and the beginning of the eighties the problem of the Roman slums was

[185] Inhabitants of the *Borgate*

[186] The main *Borgate* which saw their population grow significantly in this period were Centocelle, Montespaccato, Tufello, Marranella, Torpignattara, Villa Giordani, Quadraro, Tiburtino and San Basilio. (Source: Farina and Villani, 2017)

partially solved thanks to an increase of tenement house building activities (Farina and Villani, 2017). However, issues of alienation and urban fragmentation in the *Borgate* were still lingering on. These new sub-proletarian masses could not be absorbed by Rome's largely tertiary economy. Unemployment and poverty set the conditions for widespread delinquency. In fact, the management and control of these areas became one of the most difficult social issues in post-war Rome. By the end of the 1970s, heroin abuse and common crime reached alarming peaks in the *Borgate Romane* thus setting the conditions for further social distress and alienation. During those years, in a Roman *Borgata* called Centocelle, a group of local teenagers embraced punk rock as a form of identity, which would protect them from the violent climate of the times and, at the same time, assert their need for a collective voice.

Centocelle City Rockers

The experience of a group of young punks called *Centocelle City Rockers* is typical of the suburban nature of early Roman punk. In the aftermath of the Second World War the Centocelle district had emerged as one of the most unruly and problematic *Borgate Romane*. One of its folk heroes was Giuseppe Albano, a criminal with Marxist leanings who was regarded as a Robin Hood figure by the local population: before being assassinated under mysterious circumstances soon after the end of the Second World War, Albano had become famous for chasing and killing fascists and, according to local tales, for robbing black market speculators in order to redistribute wealth to the poor. In the post '68 climate, Communist activists turned their attention to areas like Centocelle, in order to counteract the progressive degradation of the Roman sub-proletarian masses. Since housing availability was an ongoing emergency, local collectives connected to *Lotta Continua* and *Potere Operaio* were helping the locals squat and manage occupied buildings. They were also giving free school courses and organised social events. In Centocelle, the collectives would soon express a new Marxist formation called *Collettivo Comunista Centocelle* (*Co. Co. Cen.*), who would become notorious for being a recruiting ground for the Red Brigades.

According to local punk Luigi Bonanni, by the early seventies Centocelle had become an independent town, just outside the Eternal city:

> *I remember Centocelle as a district which was completely separated from the city centre…[Centocelle was] a small village into itself. Under certain respects, this would determine a strong sense of belonging – so strong that you could recognise someone from another area by the way he talked and acted – but on the other hand you felt totally estranged from the bigger city. I remember the first time I went to Rome with my friends: it must have been 1972 or 1973...[Rome] really was another world, a very dangerous one too, because at the time, especially in areas such as the Termini Station, all kinds of criminals were hanging out freely.* (Bonanni quoted in Pescetelli, 2013, p. 228)

For a teenage Bonanni the music of Lou Reed and David Bowie became a means to overcome the isolation of their district . In autumn 1977, he came to know about punk thanks to a brief feature in a rock magazine and the October 4 TV broadcast by RAI 2:

> *I immediately fell in love with punk […] to the point that I convinced two of my childhood friends to become punks just like me. We started calling ourselves Centocelle City Rockers. Very soon, we were joined by another suburban gang of very angry kids who were inspired by films like 'The Warriors' […] in dribs and drabs, we were also augmented by few disillusioned comrades, some random suburban thugs and even a motorcycle gang called Lizard Kings. They all began to hang out with us under the Centocelle City Rockers name.* (Ibid., p. 229)

Centocelle City Rockers (henceforth *CCR*) were not a band, but a gang name under which several suburban teenagers had convened to gather. Sex Pistols' early fan group The Bromley Contingent is the easiest comparison, even if in the case of *Centocelle City Rocker*s there was no leading punk band to follow or no clothing shop where they could meet. They didn't even have a club to attend regularly: they just hung out in a Centocelle square, Piazza dei Gerani. Later on, they found shelter in a local bar called Apollo 11. *CCR* members soon started to form their own bands though, such as Bads (featuring Luigi Bonanni on vocals), Ultras and The Uglys. The group even had its spin off chapters such as *Centocelle City Dancers* who would pioneer the street dance scene in Rome. As Bonanni remembers:

> *Centocelle City Rockers had become a local brand, some sort of proud proletarian statement of belonging. It had moved on from the attitude of its beginnings. I came to know of people who moved to Centocelle just to become one of us.* (Ibid, p. 231)

Centocelle, which was hardly a happening place for the Roman youth, had now become one of the key locations for punk in the capital's area.
By 1978 though, the original group, driven by the activity of Bads – the most significant musical expression of the first years of the *CCR* experience – started drifting towards the centre of Rome. *CCR* started attending the first local punk hangouts such as Johan Sebastian Bar and the punk nights at the Titan and Piper clubs. The group soon became one of the flagship names for Roman punk.

Very soon, *Centocelle City Rocker*s began travelling out of Rome as well, to become a fixture at punk shows all over Italy.

> *We started travelling all over Italy, to attend shows by bands who were finally coming back to Italy, after years of absence. Ramones, Police, Iggy Pop, The Clash in Bologna – where Joe Strummer held our [Centocelle City Rockers] banner over his head on stage – [on that occasion] we met punks from all over Italy and we built relationships that in my case, have lasted for more than thirty years.* (Ibid.)

It can be argued that for *CCR* punk was the vehicle to reverse the process of progressive alienation and exclusion that characterised the relationship between Rome and its suburban citizenship. Not only *Centocelle City Rockers* were reclaiming the city that Fascism and Italy's Post-War economic settlement had taken away from their parents and grandparents, but they were also able to travel the entire country as a punk collective. As Bonanni has stated, Rome was not always a safe place during the Years of Lead and, as we will see in the next paragraph, it could be particularly dangerous for teenage punks: this is why it was particularly important to move around as a gang, while exploring the urban space. Furthermore, the *CCR* story highlights one specific characteristic of Roman punk which sets it aside from the Bolognese and Milanese articulations of the same subculture. While in Milan and Bologna punk was a product of the city central areas and their

intellectual vanguards, in Rome punk was mostly a suburban phenomenon, ignited by youth who were only tangentially touched by the cultural and political activity of the city centre. In Milan and Bologna, punk moved from the centre towards the peripheral districts, in a centrifuge motion. In Rome, we can see how punk was moving in the opposite direction: a centripetal force generated by the desire of some of its young population to come back where they used to belong.

Roman Punks and the *Movimento*

Since 1968 Rome had been at the epicentre of the political struggles of the Long Seventies. Lacking the heavy industry background of cities like Milan or the tradition for political organisation of a smaller and wealthier urban centre like Bologna, the Roman extra-parliamentary *Movimento* was largely composed of high school and university students, entertainment industry workers and artists, intellectuals, petty bourgeois white collar sympathisers and elements coming from the disenfranchised masses of the *Borgate*, who saw in the prospect of a Communist Revolution a possibility for social redemption. The Roman *Movimento* was also divided by the city's urban settlement. In the city centre, Leftist political activism mostly focused on ideological and cultural issues and was spearheaded by the Rome's progressive students and intellectual class. The group of young PCI politicians which led the party to its first victory in the local elections in 1976 – thus giving the city its first left wing local government since the birth of the Italian Republic – was an expression of the above-mentioned student and intellectual side of Roman Marxist activism. However, in the ever expanding *Borgate* areas of the capital city, the work of the Marxist groups was mainly focused on trying to mitigate the basic problems of the population such as the lack of proper housing, scarcity of job opportunities, issues of public health and hygiene, insufficient public transport, and alarming school drop-out rates.

However, the formation of a solid and enduring working-class conscience – which would extend beyond the impulsive antiauthoritarian attitude of the local sub-proletarian masses[187] – was a difficult task to achieve for the Marxist activists of the *Borgate*. For the most part, the roman proletarians were unemployed – or only occasionally employed – and easily targeted with blackmails by local crime lords who in most cases, were more prone to

[187] The Italian Communist Part dismissed this attitude as 'Plebeism', from the Italian/latin word 'Plebe' (Plebs).

support the neo-fascist side of Roman political activism rather than the left.[188] In fact, as it has been stated above, the battle over the political support of the *Borgate* was one of the main struggles of the Roman seventies: neo-fascists were particularly active on the Roman territory, building on nostalgic sentiments for Mussolini-era *grandeur*.

Nevertheless, most of the *Borgate Romane* were still siding with the left during the 1970s, thanks to the capillary street work carried out by both the extra-parliamentary movements and the *PCI.*[189]

Many *Borgatari* took part in *Movimento* marches and protests. Some actively joined groups such as *Lotta Continua, Potere Operaio* and *Autonomia Operaia*.

However, after the political disappointment of the 1976 national elections, the disbandment of *Lotta Continua* and *Potere Operaio* and the rising divisions within the leftist front, many young *Movimento* militants found themselves without a clear direction. Some of them would join the clandestine terrorist groups, others would abandon politics and many others would fall victim of the heroin epidemic of the late seventies. Nevertheless, years of ideological confrontation had tribalised Italian society to such a degree that political violence did not end with the crisis of the *Movimento*, on the contrary: from 1976, onwards the Red Brigades began a new season of attacks which would significantly raise the level of violence of their operations. Furthermore, lack of coordination and clear political direction combined with the radicalisation of the methods of struggle generated a long series of violent episodes among militants which increased the number of injuries and deaths caused by politically motivated attacks between 1976 and 1982. In some cases, distinguishing between political violence and petty crime cases became a problem for investigators, as practices such as the *Rapine di Autofinaziamento* – robberies which political groups would undertake to finance their activities – happened on a regular basis. Many disillusioned militants would also join the rising tide of Italian football hooliganism, bringing the guerilla tactics they had learned during years of political riots – and sometimes

[188] For instance, some key members of the *Banda Della Magliana*, the most prominent criminal organisation active on the Roman territory from the late seventies until the early nineties, were also neo-fascist militants and/or sympathisers.

[189] The Italian Communist party won the 1976 administrative elections, thus establishing the first Communist local government since the Post-War period.

the weaponry they had accumulated – to the terraces. Rome was at the forefront of this renewed epidemic of violence.

In this climate of ideological entrenchment and neo-tribal violence, the first Roman punks were often on the receiving end of violent attacks. This was not only due to their highly controversial employment of political imagery: wearing short hair, combat boots and black clothing was often times enough to be targeted with violence. As Alex Vargiu from Roman punk band Stigma remembers:

> *1977 was a year of violent clashes between left wing and right-wing students; in the city, there were riots each day and every aspect of life was absorbed by this conflict: even clothing became a battlefield. Everybody knew that fascists would wear pointed shoes and leather jackets, while comrades would prefer […] Clarks imitations and second-hand suede jackets. When the first punks made their appearance on the street, they caused disarray among the radical students because of their black leather clothes which up to that point […] had been only worn [by neo-fascists] as an homage to the regime. For the first time, the schemes which were keeping the two opposing factions separated had been broken.* (*V*argiu quoted in Pescetelli, 2013, p.240)

Despite the looming risk of attacks, it can be argued that punk might have represented – at least for some – a way out from the entrenchment which was paralysing Italian society. As Roman music journalist and former Movimento militant Ernesto Assante has written on his blog for the Repubblica newspaper website:

> *[At first] I disliked the punks: in my eyes they were reactionaries, devoid of intellect and interests ... [but then] I saw a clip of the Sex Pistols – God Save The Queen – with Johnny Rotten singing dramatically in out-of-sync playback: that scream, "no future" suddenly seemed clear to me. No future – said Rotten, and it was true for us too. There really was no future. Suddenly I realized that the rosy future we had imagined would never come: the only future we could see in front of us was made of P38*[190]*,*

[190] The Walter P38 was hand gun model which was very often employed in terrorist attacks. Its brand name became synonymous with terrorism and political violence in the Italian collective imagination.

> *Red Brigades, Communist and Fascist terrorists, the armored police patrolling the streets of my neighborhood. They were right, the punks, and so were the Pistols. Life was elsewhere.* (2007)

Hunting Punks

Interviews and memoirs of several members of the early Roman scene abound with accounts of attacks from *Movimento* members. However, the most notorious episode of organised left-wing violence against the punks took place on November 30, 1980. That night, US new wave group B-52's was performing at the city's Palaeur venue. One week before the show, Southern Italy had been hit by an earthquake which caused widespread devastation and 2,914 casualties. The concert organisers decided to devolve all earnings to the catastrophe-stricken populations. This initiative brought a very mixed crowd to the Palaeur, including many *Autonomia Operaia* members. When the militants met the punks, who had gathered to see B52's, a few insults were exchanged. After the opening slot by local punk band Yogurt had ended and before B52's could take the stage, *Autonomia Operaia* charged the punks. Largely outnumbered and not accustomed to guerrilla style tactics, the punks disbanded to be chased all around the Palaeur by their attackers. Some punks managed to escape but most of them were savagely beaten up by the Marxist Militants. According to Bonanni, the attack had been planned by *Autonomia Operaia* in advance. In his recollection, there had already been previous small-scale attacks during concerts by other local punk bands. These episodes signaled that larger and more vicious actions against the punks had been scheduled by the *Movimento* (Bonanni in Pescetelli, 2012, p. 256). Furthermore, that same year, attacks on punks by elements of *Autonomia Operaia* had already taken place at the Roman concerts by Devo and The Ramones. It is arguable, according to Bonanni, that the B52's concert had been picked by *Autonomia Operaia* as a chance to come down hard on the Roman punk community.

The Roman edition the Communist Party official newspaper, *L'Unità*, reported the incident in its review of the concert, albeit minimising the scale of the attack and blaming the punks for instigating the violence with their obnoxious look and defiant behavior:

> *The only moments of tension happened when the 'punks' showed up, wearing their combat gear. Some of them were even displaying swastikas and other war regalia.*

> *At first, they have been invited to leave but later on some people lost patience with them. Eventually, their gang fled the hall. (L'Unità, December 2, 1980)*

The viciousness of the militants' assault and the acquiescent tone of *L'Unità* towards the violence demonstrates how, three years after it had first appeared in the streets of Rome, punk was still an annoying presence for the Roman *Movimento* and even for the *PCI*. Nevertheless, incidents like the Palaeur 'punk-hunt' might be quite revealing of the state of the *Movimento* at the dawn of the 1980s: attacking the small local punk community with such vengeance was an indication of a movement which could only target weak and politically ineffective subjects such as teenage suburban punks. In fact, according to journalist Claudio Pescetelli:

> *After all, the experience of that student movement was reaching its final days. [The practices of the Movimento] would survive in the more down-to-earth activities of the Centri Sociali […] were some former Autonomi and the punks were able to co-exist, more or less, without necessarily fighting each other.* (2013, p. 267).

Nevertheless, due to the reoccurrence of attacks against punks throughout the early 1980s, this reconciliation with the political sphere was going to be significantly delayed in Rome, thus determining a disconnection between local scene and the rest of the national Anarcho-punk and hardcore network.

Roman Punk and the Music Industries

Despite the significant number of local bands and the liveliness of the city's concert scene[191], early Roman punk did not produce any significant recorded output between 1977 and 1980. Only one Roman band, Elektroshock, managed to release an album before the

[191] The activity of the local punk bands and the sympathetic attitude of some local promoter towards the subculture did help revive the city's live club scene which had been suffering from the international rock embargo towards Italy caused by the frequent clashes at concerts between *Autoriduttori* protesters and the police.

end of the 1970s: their debut was called *Asylum*[192] and it came out in 1978, to moderate critical appraisal and scarce commercial success. It was the only record release by a Roman punk band until 1981. The reasons for this scarce output can be partially explained with the lack of local labels which would scout the Roman underground in the same way as Cramps Records or Harpo's Bazaar/Italian Records were doing in Bologna and in Milan. Furthermore, the few major labels which had their headquarters in Rome, such as RCA Italiana, did not show any interest in new-wave music and continued focusing on singer songwriter material or progressive/jazz rock acts. On the other hand, the Italian division of Polydor Records, based in Milan, had released the debut album of Electro-punk duo Chrisma as early as 1977. Furthermore, most of the Roman bands were coming from suburban areas such as Centocelle, while most of the Roman show business industry and cultural circles were concentrated in the city's centre. This contingency made it very difficult for some teenage bands, who were mostly confined in districts with scarce public transport connections to the centre, to be noticed by the local industry. In the late seventies, the DIY practices which would allow punk bands to self-produce and distribute their own records were still largely unknown in Italy. Furthermore, the first examples of self-production in the Italian punk scene would be implemented in Northern Italy by the scene of Milan, Pordenone and Bologna towards the end of the decade.

Another reason for this lack of recorded output from the capital city, was Rome's geographical distance from other active early punk scenes. As it has been demonstrated, the punks in Milan, Bologna and Pordenone had been communicating steadily since their first public outings. Their relationship was facilitated by the relative proximity of the three cities and by Northern Italy's solid public transport connections. This allowed bands to attend and participate in early punk events and festivals such as the February 1978 punk festival in Treviso (near Pordenone), Sabatok Folle (Milan, October 1978), the Cinema Alemanni and the Bologna Rock festivals (Bologna, Winter/Spring 1979): during all these events, productive connections were established among bands of the Northern punk scenes. These connections facilitated collaborations which multiplied opportunities for bands to take advantage of the help and support coming from other scenes. This led to a series of releases which, for instance, would see Bolognese bands being produced by

[192] Elettroshock (1978) *Asylum* [LP] Italy, Numero Uno

Milanese labels and vice-versa.[193] Mostly due to geographical distance and lack of communication the Roman bands were excluded from all these festivals and thus missed the chance of exploiting the opportunities arising from this very early punk rock network, both on the live and record release front. It can be argued that, in this respect, Rome bands were victims of the disadvantaged conditions of Italy's South, albeit hailing from the country's capital city. As a result, Rome would remain a largely self-centered, albeit not self-sufficient, punk city.

Conclusions: Bologna and the others

The aim of the present chapter was to identify the main characteristics of the Milanese and Roman scenes in order to collocate Bologna in the wider landscape of early Italian punk. The choice of Milan and Rome as terms of comparisons has been justified by the vitality of the local scenes and by their response to punk as a music and subculture. Furthermore, Milan and Rome have been, just like Bologna, leading cities in the radical protest movement and they have also been at the centre of many of the most important events of the Long Seventies. Nevertheless, the three cities presented very different geographical, cultural, social and economic conditions, reflecting the fragmentation and inequalities which afflicted the Italian territory and state.

In Rome, punk was totally excluded by the Movement. The politically radicalised university students, whose taste determined the cultural trends of the *Movimento*, did not show any significant interest in punk. Support by local university or *Movimento* radios was almost non-existent. Roman punk was a suburban and teenage subculture, while the cultural life of the *Movimento* was dictated by university students who would gather in the central quarters of the city: in such a large metropolitan context – afflicted with insufficient public transport – this was a fundamental disadvantage for the out-of-town punks. Lack of substantial representation within the *Movimento* determined the isolation of Roman punk within its own territory. This contributed to the frequent misunderstandings between the punks and the *Movimento*. On the part of the punks, it also led to a strong dislike for

[193] Examples of these collaborations between the two cities can be found in the debut by Bolognese band Skiantos bein produced by Milan's Cramps Records (Skiantos, 1978) and by Milanese band Clito, recording in Bologna for local label Italian Records.

politics. Roman punk was also ignored by local administrators, with the only exception of some bands being occasionally included in Summer festivals such as *Estate Romana.*[194]
Rome bands could not count on the support of the local music industry as it has been demonstrated in the previous paragraph. Their geographical distance from other active punk cities also made it very difficult for the Romans to overcome the shortcomings of their own reality by taking advantage of support which might have come from other cities. On the live front though, Roman punk did make an impact on the local economy by helping revive the local concert scene which had been struggling after the sixties: concert venues like Titan and Viper started booking live bands again, focusing on local punk bands and international guests such as The Damned and Adam & The Ants.

Episodes of intolerance and hostility towards punk characterised the Milanese scene too, as it has been demonstrated by the boycott of the Decibel concert and the *Sabatok Folle* violence. Nevertheless, punk in Milan could count on some allies within the *Movimento*. Influential Radio Popolare DJ Francesco D'Abramo was one of them: his radio show regularly championed punk and he helped secure the availability of *Movimento* venue *Palazzina Liberty* for the first punk Milanese punk festival.
Furthermore, some known members of the Milanese *Movimento* such as Clito's Luisa Vecchiet, The Gags' Glezos and Kaos Rock's Gianni Muciaccia had all embraced punk: in the memory of interviewee Glezos, this proved to be very helpful, as the political credibility of these former militants often defused dangerous situations and sometimes protected the punks from violent attacks.[195]
Through these figures, some punk bands could take advantage of *Movimento* infrastructures such as the Santa Marta practice rooms and music equipment. In some cases, punk also became a vehicle to articulate political agendas.
Movimento activist Gianni Muciaccia reinvented himself politically through punk, with the *Lista Rock* experiment. This was the only notable episode which saw the Milanese punk scene approach institutional politics, albeit unsuccessfully. On the other hand, as it has been argued in the previous chapter, the initiatives of the Bolognese administration were

[194] *Estate Romana* (Roman Summer) was a free summer festival organised by the Roman public administration between 1976 and 1985.

[195] Glezos, interview with author, 15.07.2018

definitely more impactful. The *Ritmicittà* festival helped the visibility of the first wave of Bolognese punk and, at the same time, unwillingly provided a platform for the demands of the new local Anarcho-punk underground.

Coming to issues of economy, the concentration of music industry businesses on the local territory certainly helped the – comparatively – copious production and release of the Milanese punk scene, especially in its early stages. Among all the local punk scenes, Milan was able to release the highest number of punk records between 1977 and 1980. Furthermore, Milan's proximity with other lively punk cities such as Bologna, Turin and Pordenone multiplied chances of collaboration and mutual help for the local punks.

As it has been accounted for in the previous chapters, punk had sympathisers within the Bolognese *Movimento* too. People like Harpo's Bazaar/Italian Records manager Oderso Rubini, Gaznevada's Giorgio Lavagna and R.A.F. Punk's Laura Carroli had already been through significant political experiences before embracing punk. This did not prevent younger Bolognese punks such as Eletttro and Steno from being bullied and assaulted by *Movimento* members.[196] Nevertheless, episodes of organised boycott or violence towards punk never took place in Bologna.

Since the sixties, Bologna had been a hotbed for musical talent due to its large student population and its reputation as a liberal and tolerant community. Nevertheless, Bologna did not have a significant concentration of music industry businesses on its territory. As a result, some Bologna bands drifted towards the Milanese music industry seeking for professional support for their careers. On the other hand, a Milanese all female punk band like Clito openly expressed their preference for the Bolognese environment when they had to plan out their first recordings and potential releases. From the band's interviews and recollections, it emerges how Bologna appeared to be a more tolerant, less competitive and more creative minded environment than Milan in the eyes of a band made by Feminist punks who wanted to feel free to experiment in the studio. In this case, the usual tendency which saw Bolognese artists move to Milan for their advancement in the music business

[196] Steno, interview with author 14.11.2017; Elettro, interview with author 15.07.2018

was inverted: it was precisely Bologna's distance from Milan's music business that made a band like Clito gravitate towards the capital of Emilia-Romagna. Furthermore, the less violent and more artistically minded expressions of the Bolognese *Movimento*, which had laid the foundations for the city's relative acceptance of early punk, made Bologna look like a relatively safer space than Milan or Rome to many Italian punks.

The example of UK labels such as Rough Trade and Crass Records did inspire Bolognese music entrepreneurs as well as Anarcho-punk activists to start small music labels too.[197] By the end of the seventies Bologna had become a reference point for the Italian independent music market, thanks to the impulse provided by the activities of its local punk scene. In 1980, Harpo's Bazaar changed its name to Italian Records to focus almost exclusively on music. As Italian Records manager Oderso Rubini declared, it was time to *'kickstart the industrial age after the years of innocence and weaning'* (Rubini and Persiani, 2019, p. 127). Rubini was referring to his own label but his intentions were in line with Mauro Felicori's and Walter Vitali's long-term project of transforming the creative energies of the city into financial and occupational resources. This plan was only partially realised though: the Italian music industries in terms of production and promotion remained mostly based in Milan and Rome. The widespread public perception of Bologna as a primarily artistic and creative city, as opposed to business hubs like Milan, would remain essentially intact: as a consequence, Bologna would see its subcultural status grow during the 1980s and 1990s, thus becoming the 'spiritual capital' of the Italian independent pop, rock – and later hip-hop – scene.

[197] Attack Punk, the Anarcho-punk record and DIY material distribution label managed by Jumpy Velena and Laura Carroli would begin its activities in 1981.

Chapter IX

Conclusions

In this concluding chapter, I will present the contribution to knowledge which I have provided while pursuing my research goals. I will dedicate a paragraph to the main findings and research objectives of my work. I will also explain how the results of my research have at times confirmed or disproved some of my early assumptions. In the final paragraph, I will suggest and recommend possible further developments for research on the topic of early Bolognese and Italian punk.

Contribution to Knowledge

The initial motivation which has pushed me to undertake academic research on early Italian punk came from the surprising realisation that no comprehensive and scientific study had been previously published on the subject. The potential for cultural analysis which is inherent in the overlapping of a provocative subculture such as punk with the incendiary political climate of 'years of lead' Italy has been inexplicably overlooked by the Italian and international academic community.[198] In particular, when looking at the Bolognese scene, the way in which punk has been brought into the complex relationship between the Communist Party led administration and the vast area of local extra-parliamentary leftist radicalism offers a stimulating starting point for analysis and research.

I am claiming that having filled this gap in knowledge has brought a significant contribution to the scientific debate not only within the popular music studies field but also towards a better understanding of the social and cultural dynamics of this particular period of Italian contemporary history.

Main Research Objectives and Findings

The three years which I have dedicated to in depth research on Bolognese and Italian punk have resulted in a number of findings.

I will now summarise my main findings and how they have fulfilled my research objectives by validating or sometimes overturning some of my initial assumptions.

[198] The only noticeable exception is a recent article by Alessia Masini. Masini, A. 'L'Italia Del 'Riflusso' e del Punk (1977-1984)' *Meridiana*, N. 92 (2018), pp. 187-210

The Relationship Between Early Bolognese Punks and the 1977 Movement

The interaction between the first Bolognese punks and the 1977 Movement – which had one of its main centres in Bologna – was extremely complex and articulated. My initial assumption was that punk in Bologna, as well as in the rest of the country, was a reaction to the stagnant state which the radical political front had reached by the end of 1977: this thesis has been generally confirmed by my field research. I had initially overlooked how much the early Bolognese punk groups were embedded with the Movement and how their early activity was still influenced by practices which were typical of late seventies Italian activism. The line-ups of Skiantos and Gaznevada, the two most significant early punk bands in Bologna were almost entirely made by former *Movimento* radicals. Despite their musical differences and their criticism of the cultural habits of the *Movimento,* both bands can be considered as critical expressions of the so-called 'creative wing' of the Bolognese extra-parliamentary area. Even the label which released the first recordings of the two bands, Harpo's Bazaar, was an offshoot of an audio-visual radical collective, whose initial purpose was documenting political and cultural initiatives. Nevertheless, the early Bolognese bands were often openly criticised and opposed by the movement for their nihilistic attitude and provocative antics. As a result, a band like Gaznevada which was determined to dispose of the Movement's cultural baggage, was never openly accepted by the local radical community. Under this perspective it can be argued that, even if belonging to its anthropological milieu, early Bolognese punk was a conscious attempt at leaving the cultural tastes and habits of the 1977 Movement behind.

Through analysis of primary sources and narrative enquiry it has emerged how even the second wave of Bolognese punk bands, which were vocally critical of the Movement, featured several band members and sympathisers which had been actively involved with local political radicalism. Furthermore, as it has been stated in Chapter 7, the renewed political commitment of the second wave of Bolognese punk was essential in leading the Italian tradition for radical activism into the 1980s. As public space for ideological contention was progressively waning in mainstream Italian society, Bolognese Anarcho-punks were setting the conditions for a new season of political engagement which would often see the remnants of the *Movimento* and the new punks fighting side by side. This acceptance of the new, politically focused punk scene by the extra-parliamentary area will later facilitate the development of the Italian hardcore punk scene: this has provided

further proof that punk in Italy has been able to find fertile ground exclusively through the cultural validation of the Left, be it institutional or extra-parliamentary. As a conclusion, it can be claimed that early Bolognese punk can only be understood within the socio-political context of its time.

Influential Role of the Bolognese Public Administration

Another significant finding which has emerged from my research is the central role that the local public administration has played in the development of the Bolognese scene. The 1980 *Ritmicittà* Festival, which has been analysed in Chapter 7 of the present work, showed how the Communist Party-led local government was determined to re-establish dialogue with its local youth and creative community after the tragic events of the previous years. As interviews with local politicians and cultural entrepreneurs have confirmed, the Bolognese administration also wanted to explore the potential for economic growth that the creative energies which had emerged from the city's music and art scene might generate. The cooperation between the town government and the music scene did not produce lasting results. Even if during the 1980s several independent labels and distributors would begin their activities in the Bologna area, the local music scene remained largely dependent on Milan and Rome at the infrastructural level.

In any case, the festival established a model for the national cultural policies of the Italian Communist Party, which historically had always kept a suspicious approach towards pop/rock music. Throughout the 1980s it became customary for the PCI to offer free popular music-based entertainment during the annual *Feste dell'Unità* and other party gatherings.

As a – probably unexpected – side effect of The Clash concert, the protest by the local Anarcho-punks signaled the presence of a new punk scene in town. On that occasion the Bolognese punks were also able to make first contact with several subjects who had made their way to Bologna for the festival. As it has been confirmed by my interviewees, most of the first threads of the forthcoming DIY Anarcho-punk scene were established on that day. This aspect of my research has revealed how the activity of the local institutions has influenced the dynamics of the Bologna scene. At the same time, the emergence of the Bolognese punk scene contributed to a significant change in the cultural policy of the Italian Communist Party. This is further proof of the close-knit relationship between institutional

politics and popular culture during the Long Seventies: an aspect which is often overlooked by histories of the Italian extra-parliamentary left as well as by narratives about the national punk scene.

Approach to Punk by the Italian Press

Chapter 5 was dedicated to qualitative content analysis of the approach of the Italian press to early punk. Primary sources have been divided into three main categories:

- Political press, both institutional and extra-parliamentary
- Music press
- Lifestyle, news and culture magazines and journals with no direct connection to specific parties and political groups

The most interesting finding which emerged from analysing these sources was that while the specialised music press was almost invariably dismissing punk, a more sympathetic tone can be sometimes be found in political journals and lifestyle magazines. The rock press refused to take punk seriously from a musical perspective. The Italian music press was heavily influenced by Marxist ideology: therefore, the political aspect of punk was severely criticised and often openly condemned. Some radical politics journals such as *Re Nudo* and some youth culture magazines like *Doppiovù* though opted for a sociological approach to the punk subculture. Under this perspective, these magazines showed an open approach to the phenomenon which was rare in the early coverage of punk by the Italian press. These findings have at the same time subverted and confirmed some of my initial assumptions. At the beginning of my research, I was persuaded that the Italian press was monolithically opposing punk as a musical style and a phenomenon. While musical appreciation of punk can never be detected in this early coverage, some understanding of its value as a subculture can nevertheless be found in the above-mentioned journals. At the same time, the ideological undercurrent which characterised even the most tolerant reports on early punk and the repeated references to the Italian political reality, confirmed the assumption that any analysis of punk by the Italian press could not escape the polarised climate of the Years of Lead.

Findings About the Milanese and Roman Scenes

The last data analysis chapter of this PhD dissertation aims at collocating the Bolognese scene in the wider landscape of early Italian punk by looking at the early enactments of punk in Milan and Rome. The choice of Milan and Rome as terms of comparisons for Bologna was motivated by the vitality of the local scenes in both cities. Like Bologna, Milan and Rome were leading *Movimento* cities and they have also been at the centre of many of the most important events of the *Years of Lead*. Nevertheless, the two cities presented very different geographical, cultural, social and economic conditions, reflecting the fragmentation and inequalities which afflicted the Italian territory and state. The analysis of these local scenes led to some findings which have highlighted similarities and differences with Bologna and widely confirmed another claim of my research: in leading *Movimento* cities early punk could only thrive when it found allies within the ranks of extra-parliamentary political activism.

In Rome, punk was perceived as an alien and hostile object by the movement. As a consequence, the Roman scene remained largely marginalised and underrepresented in the city's cultural life. This is attributable to a series of factors:

- Most roman punks were coming from poor suburban areas such as the *Centocelle* quarter. In a city which was affected by crucial public transport problems this led to the isolation of the large parts of the punk scene.
- The *Movimento* radio stations did not give significant airplay to punk music
- Roman punk bands could not count on the support of the local music industry
- Punk bands were also largely ignored by public cultural operators, with the occasional exception of some acts being occasionally included in Summer festivals such as *Estate Romana*
- Rome was geographically removed from other punk cities like Turin, Milan and Bologna. This complicated the interaction with other Italian punks, leading to further alienation for the Roman scene.
- Political violence among local youth was particularly frequent, causing repeated attacks on the punks, whose appearance was considered politically ambiguous by both left and right-wing militants.
- Roman punk only made a significant impact on the local live scene which had been struggling after the frequent protests and boycotts enacted by the local movement

against live music promoters during the first half of the 1970s. The musical activity of local punk bands and DIY promoters convinced long standing music venues such as the Piper and Titan Club to reprise live band bookings.

Even if episodes of intolerance and violence affected the Milanese scene too, punk in Milan could count on several allies within the extra-parliamentary area. This allowed the local punks to take advantage of some *Movimento* infrastructures, which proved essential to the musical and organisational development of the scene.

The concentration of recording industry businesses on the territory facilitated the release of some early punk recordings. A substantial number of fanzines were produced by the Milanese scene as well. Furthermore, Milan proximity with other lively punk cities such as Bologna, Turin and Pordenone ensured possibilities of collaboration and mutual help for the local punks. The Roman scene was crucially debilitated by its geographical isolation and by its estrangement from the local extra-parliamentary area. On the other hand, the proximity between the two cities and, most importantly, the possibility of making occasional alliances with some parts of the local political movement proved vital to the development of the punk scenes in Milan and Bologna.

Recommendations for Further Research

The present work was aimed at answering my main research question, which was centered on the relationship between early Bolognese punk and the political climate of the Italy's years of lead. It is my hope that my findings will be useful to those who will undertake research on popular music in Italy as well as on the cultural politics of Italy's Marxist left in the twentieth century.

In fact, there are several possibilities for further research both within the scope of my own question and, at wider level, about the subject of early Italian punk. I will now summarise some of the limitations of my own work and the recommendations for possible future research which my topic implies.

Gender Identities in the Bolognese and Italian Punk Scene

If compared with other rock related musical subcultures, the early Italian punk rock scene denoted a more varied genre composition. The contribution of women to the scene was

immediately noticeable both at local and national level. Furthermore, several LGBTQ persons have been actively involved in the first steps of Italian punk. I have been touching on this subject in several parts of the present work, but I was not able to produce a systematic study about the gender diversity and inclusiveness of the early Italian punk rock scene. Moreover, ideas and perceptions of masculinity in the early punk scene should be investigated too. This is arguably material for further research on Italian punk, especially in the light of more male-dominated scenes such as the chronologically antecedent prog rock movement and the subsequent hardcore-punk circuit. Furthermore, this development could also inspire research on the complex relationship between punk and the Italian Feminist movement, which was gaining growing visibility in Italy between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. As demonstrated in the Literature Review section of the present work, several international studies which applied a feminist approach to research on punk have emerged recently. However, a systematic study on the relationship between punk and the Italian feminist movement has not been produced yet. Many female punk voices who have been essential sources for this work have told stories of a complex and sometimes conflictual relationship between punk and Italian feminism in the late seventies and early eighties. Investigating the correlation between a music subculture which saw so many females active among its ranks and the feminist movement is a recommended opportunity for research, also because this interaction was taking place in the Italian social context with its strong patriarchal and traditional traits.

Ethnographic Research

As I suggested in the methodology chapter, ethnographic research about the members of the early Italian punk rock scene could be an interesting development for future academic interest. If punk was embraced by a small number of individuals in Italy, it would be advisable to know more about the social groups of belonging of these subjectivities. Since its unification as a sovereign state in 1861, Italy has been characterised by waves of internal migration: it would be interesting to see if these processes have played a role in the composition of subcultural groups such as the punks.

Cultural, Chronological and Musical Motivations Behind the Marginalisation of Early Punk in Italy

Along the course of this research work, it has been maintained that the causes for the problematic relationship between punk and Italy were mainly of an ideological nature. While this general claim can be confirmed in the light of the research findings, it can also be argued that other factors have contributed to the marginalisation of early punk in Italy. As it has been suggested several times in the present text, the chronological delay with which information about international music trends reached Italy, the cultural assessment of popular music by Italian critics and the aesthetical values of Italian musicians might have played a role in determining the fortunes of the genre too. Looking into these other agents could complement and complete the research objectives of my research work and provide further insight into the subject.

The Subculturalisation of Italian Radicalism

In the introduction to this work, I am arguing that most studies on the subcultural expressions of the Long Seventies have been looking at this research subject from a similar point of view. My criticism of this perspective is that it looks at music related subcultures from the same standpoint which has been adopted by the late-seventies critics of Italian punk: most cultural analysts still tend to examine punk and other youth subcultures of that historical period through the lens of the ideological debate of the times. It is my claim that reversing this point of view - and thus looking at the Long Seventies through the eyes of a subculture such as punk - can lead to new findings about this historical period. For example, one of the elements which struck me during my research was connected to the 'reconciliation' between punk and Italian political activism which took place during the 1980s, despite the many misunderstandings which had occurred during the early days of punk in Italy. This process was determined by two main factors. One was the radicalisation of a subculture (punk) which embraced political engagement in terms which, albeit new and peculiar for the Italian context, were finally recognisable by the activists. The other essential factor was the progressive shift towards subcultural status of Italian political radicalism: radical ideologies (Communism, Anarchism, Fascism) had been influencing the life of millions of Italians for most part of the twentieth century. The country's everyday reality and public debate had been marked by the impact of these ideologies and the Long

Seventies can be considered as an historical period in which violent political polarisation had largely dominated the mainstream social climate of the country. Since the beginning of the 1980s though, the early stages of a process of a progressive marginalisation of radical ideals can be detected: from their central place in the Italian public debate, radical ideals were progressively moved to marginal areas of society, both in cultural and physical terms: these spaces were also inhabited by musical youth subcultures such as the new, politically conscious punk of the early-to mid-eighties. Masini claims that from the early eighties '*il punk vuole farsi Movimento*'[199] (2019, p. 146) This is undoubtedly true but the reconciliation between punk and the heirs (or veterans) of the Movement(s) of the Long Seventies was only possible thanks to the shift of Italian radicalism towards subcultural status in Italian society. This phenomenon, which I describe as the 'Subculturalisation of Italian Radicalism', is a vast socio-political trend which is still ongoing and that, in my opinion, finds its roots in the *Riflusso* years of the Long Seventies. I am also arguing that, since political radicalism had started to assume typical subcultural traits from the early 1980s, some aspects of the phenomenology of the Subculturalisation of Radicalism cannot be fully understood without recurring to the key concepts and approaches which have been applied to research on subcultures in the field of cultural studies. This vindicates my initial claim: looking at the Long Seventies through the eyes of a subculture – or subcultural studies – can lead to some fresh findings about a much-debated period of Italy's contemporary history. In this perspective, further research on the Subculturalisation of Radicalism might also shed new light on the relationship between popular culture and radical political engagement in Italy from the 1980s to the present times. Moreover, looking at other countries comparatively, to analyse the possible occurrence of similar dynamics in terms of subculturalisation of radicalism in the same historical period could lead to new findings about the relationship between society and politics also at international level.

Research on Early Italian Punk at National Level

The scope of my research work was deliberately limited to the Bolognese scene, with references to early punk in Milan and Rome for comparative reasons. However, Bologna can be considered as an exceptional case in the wider Italian approach towards punk.

[199] 'Punk wants to become a movement': the use of the term 'movement' by Masini must be understood as 'political povement' as it is commonly

Despite some initial misunderstandings, the development of the punk scene in Bologna was facilitated by the city's thriving musical community, its libertarian and leftist tradition and the creative approach of its student movement to political struggle. Indeed, the Bolognese case is an example of how the validation of the political sphere was absolutely necessary for the acceptance of rock related musical genre's in Italy: from this perspective, Bologna fully confirms this research work's initial assumption. Nevertheless, as the chapter on the Milanese and Roman scenes has demonstrated, things were radically different outside Bologna. This is why an encompassing academic study on early Italian punk at nation-wide level should be undertaken in order to understand the nature of the relationship between this subculture and the country's socio-political context. For the above-mentioned reasons, my research also had to omit the contributions of important '*punk & movimento*' cities like Turin and Genova. Due to its peculiarity, the case of Pordenone – a small north eastern city which featured a lively and productive punk scene – had to be excluded as well. A study on punk in Southern Italy would be advisable too, as the tendency of most subcultural studies is to focus almost exclusively on the Northern part of the country. Moreover, the history of Italian punk can't be told or analysed without including smaller cities like Modena, Reggio Emilia or Verona: Italy's geo-political reality and cultural dynamic is composed of small and medium-sized cities as well as metropolitan centres like Milan, Naples or Rome. This is why the most urgent development on the present research work is a study – or a series of studies – analysing early Italian punk in its national context.

Italian Punk in the International Context

Alessia Masini's most recent work (2019) focuses on a comparison between UK and Italian punk with specific attention to issues of politics. Contributions by Mara Persello (2016) have looked at peripheral appropriations of punk in Germany and Italy, establishing a comparison between two countries in which ideological questions were dominating the public debate. Nevertheless, there is still fresh territory for research on the subject of Italian punk in the wider European and international context. Moreover, study on the relationship between punk rock and politics could significantly benefit from the inclusion of the 'Italian case', given the intense ideological polarisation which characterised the country in the late 1970s. In particular, looking at the relationship of early Italian punk with the radical leftist movements of the time and establishing an analytical comparison with

dynamics of interaction between punk and the Marxist political sphere in other countries, could enrich the international scientific debate on this subculture as well as on the interrelation between the left and popular culture in general.

The main research aim of this thesis was to provide an analysis of the cultural dynamic which was ignited by the first articulations of Bolognese punk, in the context of that long phase of political contention within Italian society which is commonly described as the Long Seventies or the 'Years of Lead'. To achieve this, I have focused on the period between the years 1977 and 1980: during this heated phase of Italian contemporary history the punk subculture was moving its first steps in Bologna among many difficulties and misunderstandings. I have decided to name the present work 'Shock Antistatico' (Anti-Static Shock) – borrowing the title of the opening track from the debut album of Bolognese punk band Gaznevada[200] – in order to convey the semantic and political dissonance determined by punk's first appearance in the Italian context of the Long Seventies. My claim is that the misunderstandings and the opposition which early punk faced in Italy were largely – albeit not exclusively – caused by the socio-political condition of the country in the second half of the seventies. At national level, this dynamic often led to a rejection of early punk as a music style and a subculture: nevertheless, in Bologna – and to some extent in Milan too – punk managed to take root thanks to the support of persons and infrastructures which belonged to the 1977 Movement. This is the main thesis that the present work has been trying to prove: in late-seventies Italy, rock-related popular music was subjugated to ideological analysis to the point that approval or refusal by the largely influential Marxist area could decisively influence the popularity and the diffusion of a specific musical genre or subculture.

[200] Gaznevada *Sick Soundtracks* [LP] Italy, Italian Records

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Giorgio Lavagna (Gaz Nevada singer/77 movement activist/Traumfabrik founder) 30.01.2018

Stefano 'Steno' Cimato: (Nabat singer/RAF PUNK member) 14.11.2017

Glezos (The Gags singer/guitarist) 15.07.2018

Eletttro (Punk fan, fanzine editor) 15.07.2018